FATHER ABRAHAM

IRVING BACHELLER

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FATHER ABRAHAM

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By

IRVING BACHELLER

Author of

The Light in the Clearing, A Man for the Ages,
In the Days of Poor Richard, Etc.

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"We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred
thousand strong."

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CHAPTER I

THE HOPES OF HOPKINTON

THE bay mare had had a bad night. She was one of the many slaves of Ezra Town. She had been kept too long in harness at heavy work. Young Randall—a boy of fourteen—had found her that beautiful summer morning in 1857, near the edge of a thicket, when he was bringing in the cows at sunrise. The mare was dead but her foal was living and tumbling about on weak legs—a handsome, little, bright-bay filly with a blazed face. The boy's heart was touched by this pathetic child of the pasture nudging her dam and calling to deaf ears for the help she needed. The sturdy lad struggled up the slope from the pasture supporting and carrying the filly. He put her in a corner of the woodshed and he and his grandmother fed her warm cow's milk, sweetened with maple-sugar, out of a bottle. He made a bed of fresh-cut grass for the newcomer and went to his milking.

The 'fore breakfast work was done when the family gathered in the shed to look at the little orphan of the fields.

"Of course, Randall, there's only one thing to be done," his stepfather declared. "We must knock her in the head. It will not pay to bother with her—too much time, too much milk, too much trouble. She'll die, anyway, inside of a week."

"I want to raise her," said Randall. "She's a full-blooded Morgan. Look at her head and neck. I couldn't bear to see her killed—she is so pretty. I want to raise her."

So the boy pleaded, but Ezra was obdurate. He could see only the cold practical side of the matter.

"I'll buy her," said Randall. "I'll give you the ten dollars that I got for my mink skins."

The boy's grandmother added a helping plea: "And I'll look after the little filly when Randall is working."

"Maybe ten dollars would pay for the milk," Ezra Town answered after a moment's thought. "It's a bad bargain for both of us, but if you're bound to do it, go ahead."

Such was the beginning of the career of the famous Morgan mare, Tyke, who helped to make the history herein related. She was nursed with a bottle by Randall and his grandmother until she had grown strong and got a liking for the grass of the fields. Then she and a cheerful pet dog were wont to follow the boy, as he went about his work on the farm—a pretty thing to see, and it was the talk of the countryside. The filly had become a shapely, sleek and beautiful creature. It was because Randall carried meal and sugar in his pockets for this pet of his that Ezra Town complained of her as an extravagance and a time-killer.

The boy's firm but gentle hands broke her to saddle, bridle and harness. No thoroughbred in a king's stables was more carefully groomed.

There was on the farm another distinguished helper in the making of these memories—the above mentioned dog—a small, black spaniel dog, of the name of Teaser, who accompanied the boy on his hunting trips in the woodland. He was a tireless, joyful creature most useful in "treeing" and retrieving partridges. From the day of the filly's birth this dog had seemed to regard her with a deep interest and curiosity as if he thought her a highly promising asset. When, by and by, she was able to be up and about he became her playmate and companion, lying close beside her in the shed at night.

One bright day in the autumn of 1859 the whole family set out for the county fair at Canton, leading the filly behind. Randall was to drive her, hitched to Mr. Partridge's sulky, in the colt race. They had planned to leave Teaser at home, but he had made sure of his freedom by hiding under the barn. When they had gone too far to turn back the filly began to whinny and then they discovered Teaser at her heels. On a majority vote he was taken into the family wagon and made one of the party, but it must be recorded that Ezra Town was for beating him and sending him back.

The race began. Teaser was between the knees of Grandfather Hope, in the family wagon at the track side, when the colts went by the second time with clattering hoofs, in a dust cloud, Tyke far in the lead. Seeing his friend, Teaser broke away and leaped from the wagon and took after the scurrying mob of colts. He went out around the field and caught up with his friend in the home stretch and led her to the wire, barking joyously, his long furry ears flapping up and down to the great amusement of the crowd. The filly won her race and the purse of sixty dollars in the sensational time of two fifty-eight. It was then that the famous Titch Warner and Horace Partridge said that she would make a world beater. That day the boy suffered a great temptation, for Ebenezer Miner of Canton offered him the sum of four hundred dollars for the fine Morgan two-year-old.

The money would have been useful. It would have given Randall the schooling that he needed and longed to have. But to him Tyke was more than a filly, she was a friend and comrade. A kind of affection had grown up between them.

"Now, boy, if you really want to go to school, sell her," his stepfather advised.

But Randall could not induce himself to do it. The truth is that, in view of the man's work Randall had been doing on the farm, Ezra Town should have been glad to give him a fair amount of schooling.

"Don't talk to me any more about going to school," Town had said on their way home.

"I have kept up with the men in my work, and I hoped that you would give me at least two more terms in Potsdam," the boy answered.

"Nonsense! The fact is, you don't earn your salt, boy," his stepfather rejoined.

It was this remark which destroyed the peace of that home in Hopkinton, St. Lawrence County, New York, in which Randall lived.

The boy had to use his own money for books and tuition and work for his board when he went to school that winter in Potsdam. On his return in the early summer the break came. The storm arose at noon when the family was at dinner, and below is some of its thunder and lightning.

"No, sir," said old Joshua Hope, as he helped himself to the salt pork, "I don't believe in no hell o' fire an' brimstun with folks a-fryin' an' sizzlin' an' sufferin' for ever."

"Why not?" Ezra Town wished to know.

"'Cause there ain't no human constitution could stan' it," the old man answered, his voice rising and his face reddening as he spoke. He continued:

"A man who can believe in that has no feelin's, an' I guess the devil's gridiron wouldn't hurt him any."

A cloud came over the face of Ezra Town. His neighbors agreed that if Ezra had any "feelin's" they had never been discovered. He only put down his knife and fork and rubbed his hands together and said in a smiling half whisper:

"Why, Mr. Hope, I am astonished to hear you talk like that."

Ezra Town had an indurated sense of righteousness. It enveloped him like a shell. No shaft could penetrate it. In half a moment he added, turning to his wife, "Elizabeth, we must pray for your father."

"Go ahead and pray yer damndest," old Joshua went on with a heat that robbed his tongue of all prudence. "I'm feelin' wicked an' I need prayin' for, God knows, but I want to pick out the man that prays for *me.* I need one that has got some influence an' my idee is that a man has no better standin' in Heaven than he has in his own neighborhood. Now ye know where I be."

It is important only that the reader should know where Joshua was, that summer of 1860. Joshua Hope was a born pioneer. His spirit and his adventures had had their effect on the location of his mind and his body. They had made him a solver of problems. As a youth he had shipped before the mast and had lived on the sea until he was twenty-one. In that year he came home on a visit, fell in love, married and settled down on his wife's ancestral acres in Vermont. He was that Joshua Hope who was the most famous athlete in the New England of his time—undefeated in jumping, wrestling and boxing.

Long before the beginning of this little history, he had moved into a new country. The call of the rich unbroken lands of the West, laced by the paths of God's cattle, had reached his home in Ellington, Vermont, and scattered his family. In the panic days, which had followed the breakdown of '37, only those who had prospered well in better times could resist the call. Who shall say it was not the voice of God? No sweeter to the ancient poets had been the pipe of Pan or the lute of Apollo.

In 1835, his oldest son, Roderick, had gone to Virginia, on his way to Kentucky, but had tarried in the former state and finally settled there in the Shenandoah Valley.

One year later, Josiah, another son, and his young wife had traveled in a covered wagon to Illinois and made their home in Springfield.

Soon Joshua himself had sold his rocky acres. He, too, had been dreaming of Illinois, but his wife, who was not a strong woman, grew heart-sick at the thought of a thousand-mile journey on wheels moved at the slow pace of oxen. As a compromise they had set out, with their youngest son Robert, for St. Lawrence County in northern New York where a sister of Mrs. Hope was then living. They had settled on a stumpy farm, almost literally in the shadow of the Adirondack wilderness, in the town of Hopkinton. There the deer of the wild woods, the fowls of the air and the fish in the streams had made life easy until their farm was cleared, fenced, stocked and sowed. Robert had married there and his son, Randall, may be said to be the heart of our history.

Soon after the Civil War a New York newspaper published an account of the great adventures of "Randall Hope of Hopkinton" as told by himself and sundry witnesses. The gist of it became a fireside tale that traveled far on the lips of soldier men and old wives and fair ladies. It was a tale of youth and love and adventure which made a special appeal to red-blooded men and women. Moreover it threw a searching light on vital events in the story of America and upon some of its greatest characters.

Randall was a big, blond, rugged lad of eighteen when he took the path that led him into the shouting and the tumult of an ending era. His father had died and his mother had been remarried to Ezra Town, a flinty, hard-fisted widower, who owned a mill and some thousands of acres of which hundreds were sowed and the rest ran far out into the big south woods.

In his youth Ezra had come from the shore of Massachusetts Bay where, as a boy in school, the taunt of "slaver" and tainted money had been hurled upon him, it being well known, there, that his forefathers had prospered in bringing negroes from Africa and selling them to the planters of the South.

Ezra Town was the only rich man in Hopkinton. He had found for himself a new and uncondemned variety of slaving. He was a man-driver. Every work-day for years he had driven himself and his help from dawn to dark. He had studied the art of driving. His men were all in debt to him. He had put a twist on their noses, to use a horseman's phrase. They were mortgaged to him. They had children and were looking to Mr. Town for food and shelter. Having married the daughter-in-law of Joshua Hope, Ezra Town had bought the latter's farm and become a part of the Hope household.

In the saddle he rode, every day, from one part of his domain to another. Doctor Preston used to say that he ran the farms and their help—chiefly their help. Some of the latter had run away. Young Randall would also have run away if he could. He arose every morning at four-thirty and was working an hour before breakfast time feeding and milking and currying and stable cleaning. After breakfast he went with the men into the woods or fields and was expected to keep their pace.

Old Joshua continued the emptying of his full heart at the dinner table.

"By the Lord Harry!—Ezry! I wish you knew how to swear. You've got only one sin, but it's a whale. It would be a lot easier to git along with if it was broke up into a dozen small deviltries. A careless all 'round sinner ain't got nigh so much to answer for. One big sin is like a hump on yer back—it sticks out so. If you could only smoke an' chaw tobaccer an' enjoy a glass o' grog an' rip out an oath, once in a while, I'd like ye better. It ain't that I enjoy them things. They're bad enough but there's things that are a darn sight worse."

"What could be worse, I'd like to know?" Ezra asked. He never lost his temper for he had none to lose.

"Yer love o' money that turns every man ag'in' ye an' causes about all the swearin' that's done in Hopkinton. Your business is a reg'lar swearin' school. It wouldn't be half so bad fer ye if ye done the swearin' yerself. But you wouldn't dast do that. You squeeze it out o' the other fellow. You spit out a gnat an' swaller a camel. Your money is the root of the darndest crop o' evil I ever see."

Ezra Town made no answer. His feelings had not been hurt. He was only thinking—secretly thinking of that curious, disturbing charge, that his conduct had been the cause of profanity and hatred. The dinner ended in silence.

Ezra returned to the fields. Randall did not go with him. He sat down with his mother and grandparents for a talk. He confided to them a secret plan. He wanted to go to Virginia to live "for a year or so" with his Uncle Roderick and go to school there.

Roderick, a grand and massive gentleman in broadcloth and a beaver hat with a heavy gold watch and chain and seals and a diamond breast-pin and a ruddy face decorated with a gray mustache and chin lock, had come north the summer before to visit his parents. He had told, with alluring glibness, of his "niggers," horses and hounds, and of his two thousand acres. He had scattered money with a lavish hand. He had also invited his father and mother and the boy Randall to come and live with him on the big plantation. But, to his parents, Roderick had become a stranger. Those two, changed as they were, still kept the essential spirit of old New England.

To Roderick slavery was now a sacred institution, and wealth and its luxuries the chief aim of life. Fundamentally he was another Ezra Town, but handsomer in substance and detail. Roderick was a captivating figure. He was frank and communicative. He had some generosity. First of all, he was generous to himself. His generosity to others was in the nature of an expense for advertising and promotion.

His house and that of Ezra Town were different—very different—but they both rested on the same bank of sand—the same selfishness and inhumanity. The boy Randall had been moved and touched by the grandeur of his uncle, so, in that day of trouble, his thoughts had naturally turned toward the magnificent man in Virginia.

Joshua Hope took his grandson to a big map of "The United States and its Territories," bought from a traveling pedler, which hung on the parlor wall. This map gave all the main roads and trails east of the Mississippi, and a table of distances.

"There's yer route," he said, as he ran his finger down the road running west and south. "There's bridges or ferries on every river. You could put a bridle an' saddle on that bay filly o' yours an' make it in less than twenty days. All you'd need, at this time o' year, would be a blanket an' saddle-bags fer provender."

"But he's only a boy o' eighteen, and it's a long journey, Joshua," old Abigail Hope had objected.

"It will be better for him than a year's schoolin'," Joshua went on. "It's mostly settled country an' all he has to do is mind his own business. He has twenty-two dollars that he got for his mink and otter pelts. That will buy everything he'll need and the little mare could go to Californy. I'd rather trust him on her than on them new railroad cars that clatter along at twenty-five mile an hour an', like as not, git smashed to bits with everybody that's on 'em. If he don't like it there he can come back in the fall."

"But I'm skeered fer fear he *will* like it," said the boy's grandmother. "We don't want no more Rodericks in the family, believin' in slavery an' state rights."

"I promise you that I shall never believe in those things," the boy assured her.

"He's proof ag'in' that," Joshua declared. "It's been bred in his bone to hate 'em. Ye ought to know it after hearin' him speak that piece o' Dan'l Webster's."

Mrs. Town, the boy's mother, fell in with the opinions of Joshua. The family quarrel had distressed her and there was no prospect of peace ahead.

"If the boy can't be happy here, maybe it's for the best that he should go to his uncle for a year or two," she had said with a sigh.

The decision of this family council was in favor of his going. But immediately their plan ran into unexpected troubles. Ezra Town learned of it from his wife. He objected. He said that he had bought the Hope farm and taken the old people into his home on the understanding that he should be entitled to Randall's time, save some allowance for schooling, until the boy was twenty-one. He also claimed a considerable sum for the keep of the filly, and insisted that she must stay in the pasture until it was paid.

Joshua had had no such understanding, for, in fact, not a word had been said, ever, about Randall's time or the keep of the filly, and the old gentleman insisted upon his grandson's right to do as he wished with his time and his colt.

In fear of the ill will of Ezra, the old gentleman advised the boy to give up his plan. Moreover, Randall's filly went lame the next day, and could not be ridden. Promptly her young owner discovered that she had been lamed "o' purpose" with a piece of cord drawn tight to the skin under the fetlock. Just then his spirit went into revolt.

"If you'll let me I'm going to get out of here," he said to his grandfather that evening.

"I don't blame ye a bit, an' I guess it's fer the best," old Joshua answered. "I'll fill them saddle-bags tomorrer an' soon after dark comes you light out an' put as many miles as ye can betwixt you an' Hopkinton afore daylight. Then go back in the woods somewheres an' take off the saddle an' feed yerself an' the mare an' lay down with her an' get yer rest. Remember, you're a runaway slave, an' like as not he'll foller ye on some trumped up charge an' offer a reward. I wouldn't wonder. You better be careful till ye get away down the state south o' Boonville. While you're doin' the chores to-night I'll ketch the mare an' git her ready an' tie her in the shanty down in the sugar bush. You'll only have to jump in the saddle an' make off. You'll find a candle and some lucifers on the choppin' block. We won't say a word to no one but yer gran'mother about this."

"I'll be worryin' about mother an' gran'mother an' you, as soon as I'm gone," said the boy.

"Thunder an' Mars! Yer gran'mother an' I ain't lived seventy year an' more without learnin' how to find happiness when it tries to hide away, an' yer mother gits along with Ezry fust rate," the old man answered. "I'll have quite a job o' lyin' to do, but that won't surprise the Lord a bit, an' I rather guess that, under the circumstances, He won't be very mad about it."

CHAPTER II

ON THE ROAD TO VIRGINIA

AT supper that night his mother observed that Randall was silent and sober-faced, and that he was often looking at her, and not, she remembered later, in the way he had been wont to look at her. He had gone to her room, after supper, but she knew not that his purpose was to deposit in one of her bureau drawers a token and a loving message which were a comfort to the woman when she discovered them next day.

The night came on, and Randall went out, as his custom had been, to see that the stabled horses were all right before going to bed. As he was about to leave the house this thought came to him that he would go to his mother, who was working at the sink, and kiss her. He had never kissed her save once, and then she had seemed to be embarrassed and had reminded him that it was not a manly thing for a boy of his age to be doing. He had wondered why, for he had read of boys who kissed their mothers. What more could he do to satisfy his heart?

The last chore done, he proceeded to the sugar bush. The beloved Tyke greeted him with a low, welcoming whinny as he came near. He found the candle and lighted it and surveyed the young mare and his equipment. A blanket, folded and tied, lay back of the saddle. His grandfather's pistol hung in a holster from the pommel side. The bags were packed full. He put out the candle-light, loosed the tether and jumped into the saddle and set out on a dark trail toward the turnpike. As has been said, the filly was one of the shapely, high-headed Morgan breed whose hardy forebears had been toughened on the slanting roads of Vermont. Once in the highway, she was eager to go, and with a free head she carried her load at a swift trot. The sky was clear, but there was no moon.

The filly stopped to drink at the familiar trough in Potsdam. She was wet, then, and the boy steadied her to a slower pace after they had crossed the bridge on their westward way. He rode through the long night, thinking much of the dear friends he was leaving and of the strange lands ahead. He felt, too, a saddening sense of the sternness of life. The road had been deserted save by a few teams, returning late from mill, their drivers singing as he passed them. The sounds had cheered him. Some time in the early morning he dismounted and gave the mare a few minutes of rest and baiting at the roadside.

The night had been a long monotonous stretch of starry sky and black forest, and dim landscape and silence, broken only by the teamsters' songs and wheels, and sounding bridges and murmuring brooks (in which the mare had often stopped to drink and cool her hoofs), and barking dogs, and bull-frogs bellowing in the marshes, and the rustle of owls' wings which had fanned his head and given him quite a scare in a stretch of thick woods. By and by, in passing through a village he saw lights, here and there, and, beyond, windows were glowing on the hills. The dawn was near.

"Grandfather will be feeding the horses now, and the windows will be lit up at home and mother will be getting breakfast, if she isn't crying," he said to Tyke.

Then for a few minutes he was buried in a kind of emotional landslide and trying to dig himself out. How often, coming in from the barns in the early morning, he had seen his mother's shadow on the lighted window panes as she hurried about the stove and the table—and then the smell of frying ham and eggs or sausage and the cheering "Hello, Ran."

Again he came into woods where he left the road and made his way through pine thickets a quarter of a mile or more to the bottom of a deep ravine. There was water and there he dismounted and unsaddled the mare and washed her feet and legs and muzzle and rubbed her dry with a flannel cloth, which he found in one of the bags. Then he gave her water and a bait of the herbs and grasses which grew at the brookside and a feed of corn-meal. In one of the bags he found an ample store of doughnuts and cheese and bread and butter (enriched with preserved raspberries, spread between the slices) and some cold chicken. The sight of this reminded him of his hunger, and he sat down to eat. It was broad daylight now.

As he ate he surveyed his surroundings. The filly was looking up the side of the ravine, her ears erect. She whinnied. Suddenly Randall saw Teaser's head above the bushes. The dog stood still, looking down anxiously at his friends. Cautiously he had exposed himself to the eye of his master but at a distance which would insure a safe retreat if necessary. The look and attitude of the dog conveyed this intimation: "I hope that you need a friend as badly as I do."

"Teaser," Randall called, "you rascal! How do you happen to be here?"

The dog was quick to detect the note of welcome in that astonished voice. Teaser had no high opinion of men in general. They were not to be trusted, especially if they swore and chewed tobacco and had a whip in their hands. Such men were always trying to humiliate a dog. But this boy was his hero and his friend.

"Dear old Teaser!" Randall cried, whereupon the dog sprang forward and leaped into the arms of his master and, shaking with joy, licked his face and hands and then scampered around him as if feeling the necessity for violent self-expression.

Tyke nickered as she looked at them, seeming to say: "I knew the scamp would turn up soon. He was back of my heels all night."

Soon the boy and the dog sat, side by side, eating their breakfast, the dog getting half of each doughnut and piece of bread and butter apportioned for that meal.

"You little beggar!" Randall exclaimed laughingly. "You ought not to have sneaked off this way. You eat so darn much I don't know how I'm going to feed ye. But I guess we'll make out. Anyway, I'm glad to see ye. Yes, I am."

Their breakfast eaten, Randall said to Teaser, "You stay here with Tyke. I'm going out to hunt some hay. If you and I could only eat hay, we'd be all right."

He made his way back to the road, where he set a mark to guide him, and then proceeded to the edge of the clearing. There with his hunting knife he cut an armful of hay by the roadside and returned to his camp where Teaser was lying patiently near the tethered mare. Randall gave her the hay and applied tar oil to her ears, neck and belly and to his own face and hands to discourage mosquitos. This done, he lay down on a thick bed of needles, under a pine tree, with a few balsam boughs for a pillow. Teaser came and stretched out beside him. Hearing only the familiar sound of Tyke's grinding, as she ate the hay, he soon fell asleep.

When he awoke, the day was near its end. Tyke was down on the bed of gray moss beneath her and sound asleep. Teaser was shivering and uttering small cries in a kind of nightmare.

He fell asleep again and dreamed that he was calling Tyke in the home pasture. Soon he was awakened by the hairy chin of the mare tickling his face. He opened his eyes and saw her lips close to his cheek. Often he had called her up from the distant fields and a lump of sugar had been her reward for coming. Once when he had gone to sleep under a butternut tree of a Sunday afternoon she had awakened him as she had now done.

He rubbed her head and ears which were itching from mosquito bites, and kissed her. Tyke was the only creature except his mother and Ruth Andrews, a neighbor's pretty daughter, of his own age, whom he had ever kissed.

"Tyke, you make me homesick," he said, as he straightened her black forelock. "You slipped your halter, didn't ye, and I don't blame ye. I love ye, Tyke, and you and I and Teaser will fight it out together—yes, we will. I'd as soon think of selling my own sister, if I had one."

In a moment horse, dog and boy were up and getting ready for the night's work.

"Well, Teaser, it's supper time, and I'm as hungry as a bear again," said Randall cheerfully, as he fed the mare.

He dipped in the brook a cup which he had made of birch bark and sat down to sup with his curly-coated friend. When the mare was saddled and Randall was packing the bags he said:

"Teaser, you and I ought to be 'shamed of ourselves the way we eat. We just sit here an' stuff as if we didn't know there was going to be any to-morrow and next day. We'll have to hold on to our hungers until we begin to live in the clearing. To-morrow morning let's try to forget to eat. We'll just let it slip our minds."

He jumped into the saddle and the dusk was thickening as they came out upon the road and resumed their journey. They camped next morning in thick woods on the shore of the Black River. Randall fed and watered the mare and sat down and began to whittle. Teaser came and looked wistfully at his master. Then he stood on his hind legs and barked.

"You beggar! Why couldn't you let me forget it?" the boy scolded as he brought the saddle-bag now less than half full of provisions. "I tell you this eat, drink and be merry business has got to stop."

But it didn't. They ate as heartily as ever. "It's like sliding down-hill," Randall said to his dog. "You can't stop in the middle of the hill."

No adventure worth recording came to them until far along in the next night. They had passed a burying-ground. The sky was partly overcast and there were only a few stars to light the darkness. Randall could but dimly see the gleam of the white stones. He dreaded these small fields of the dead more than anything that he saw in his night travels. Often he imagined that the stones were moving about and talking together, like folk after meeting, as he passed them. He had hurried by the burying-ground and the mare had settled into a rapid walk when, being sleepy, he began to doze in the saddle. Awaking suddenly, he discovered, to his astonishment, that a man on a white horse was riding at his side. He could just dimly see the man who seemed to be staring at him.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, but got no answer.

The silence of the man alarmed Randall. What could it mean? Again he looked at his strange companion. He gave the mare a quick urge with voice, rein and heel. She sprang into a swift gallop. The stranger increased his pace accordingly and kept abreast of him. Then began a singular race in the dark the like of which is nowhere recorded. The boy put his mare to her best pace but could not get rid of his weird companions. He soon abandoned the effort and slowing his pace shouted to the man at his side:

"Who are you and what do you want of me?"

Still he got no answer. The only sounds that broke the silence of the night were the muffled tread of the horses' feet and the call of an owl in the adjacent field. The courage of Randall Hope was getting its first trial.

He was badly scared until the thought came to him that this stranger could be no ghost because, now and then, his leg touched Randall's, and the latter could hear the breathing of the white horse, which would not have happened if they had been ghosts, he was sure. He drew his pistol and carried it in his right hand and kept his eye on the dim figure beside him. As they rode on through the still night, his fear began to leave him. He got used to it. When the day was breaking, something ahead attracted the attention of his mare. Suddenly she reared. Then he saw a man directly in front of him.

"Halt!" the latter shouted.

The ghost at Randall's side pushed half a horse length beyond him and hit out like lightning. It was all done in the wink of an eye. The boy heard something come down on the head of the man who stood in his way. He saw him fall to the ground. In a jiffy the ghost was out of the saddle and upon the prostrate man. Daylight was coming. Randall could now see clearly what was going on. The ghost was putting a pair of shackles on the wrists of him who lay in the dust. A pistol was lying beside the latter. The boy dismounted, not knowing what it all meant, and stood by the heads of the horses. In the growing light he saw a tall, handsome, powerfully built young man, about twenty-five years old, with a hickory club some two and a half feet long hanging by a cord from his elbow. He was the ghost. The stranger whom he had felled lay in the dusty grass of the roadside groaning. He could now see him clearly in the morning light—a thin, raw-boned, dark-skinned youth with black eyes and hair, and an old scar on his right temple. The ghost indicated by gestures that Randall was to guard the man on the ground and shoot if necessary. Then he drew a little scratch pad from his pocket and began to write on it with a pencil, as follows:

"I am John Penrose of Adams—a constable. I am deaf and dumb. Of late a highwayman has been robbing people on this road. He will do it no more. Excuse me for keeping along with you through the night. If I had let you get ahead of me you would have been in danger and probably I would have lost my man."

He lifted the highwayman into the saddle with astonishing ease, mounted the pillion behind him and set out on his way to Adams.

The trio known to the reader as Randall, Tyke and Teaser resumed its journey, now facing south and no longer, as the boy supposed, in the need of traveling by night. They ate the last of their store of food that morning and lay by until noon in a maple grove not far from the highway. It had begun to rain, and boy, dog and horse found welcome shelter in a sugar shanty. The sky cleared soon after midday, and being now in need of food they set out again, stopping at a near farm-house where its family was eating dinner. A kindly, sympathetic man and woman gave the travelers a hearty welcome and a memorable feeding and sent them on their way with full saddle-bags.

That afternoon they came into deep woods where Randall, directed by a man he met, took a trail across a stretch of wild country many miles shorter than the main wagon road to Utica. Soon he fell asleep in the saddle and when he awoke the mare was toiling in a slough where she sprained an ankle. Dismounting, he consulted his compass and saw that he was completely turned about and traveling northward, on a road partly overgrown with grass and little traveled, in a land of dead trees and wild cherry bushes and fireweed then in blossom. Raised on the edge of the woods as he had been, he knew the meaning of this. The big timber had been cut and the country overrun by fire. Doubtless the old road led to an abandoned lumber camp, which could not be far away. He determined to press on and find it, thinking that, with a bag full of provisions, it would be a good place to stop until Tyke had recovered from her lameness. He soon came upon the camp abandoned a year or so before.

There were a number of squatty log structures standing in a row and roofed with spruce bark. They were in a lonely setting of weeds and bushes and dead silence. He chose the farthest shanty because it stood beside a spring out of which a little brook flowed into a near pond. It was free of rubbish save a blacksmith's forge, a heap of rusty horseshoes, and a pair of old sleds stored in a corner. Its roof and walls were in good condition. There he tied the mare and bathed her swollen ankle with cold water and bandaged it.

Outside was a rank growth of good timothy hay and he cut a big feed of it and made a fine bough bed for himself and Teaser. Night came on. There were many sounds in that lonely place. Bullfrogs were booming and deer slopping about in the lily pads of the pond. A hedgehog was chattering on a hillside behind the camp. A fox went through the valley barking as he passed. All these sounds had been familiar to the boy from his childhood. As they fell into the silence they seemed to increase its depth and solemnity.

He had spent many a night with his father and grandfather in the deep woods, but this was the first night that he had been alone in a place remote from fresh man-tracks save those of his own feet. He was not afraid, but lonely. Teaser, broken against barking in the woods after sundown and worn with travel, had stretched out on the bough bed and fallen asleep. Tyke had finished her eating and lain down.

Randall, with belt and holster buckled on his waist, sat in the doorway of his camp looking out at the pond and listening to the many voices of the night. Suddenly he heard footsteps approaching in the trail. Then a whistled call like that of a night bird. It was three times repeated. Again he heard the footsteps and low voices. It gladdened his heart to hear voices.

He arose and walked in the direction from which they proceeded.

Fortunately the road in front of the old camp was now covered with moss so that the boy's feet were muffled. Suddenly a voice, the like of which he had never heard, came across the silence. It was a deep, resonant, musical voice—a golden voice which filled the words it spoke with the bitterness in the heart of the speaker, and made them easy to remember.

"Poor Lew!" it said, "I wonder what has happened to him. If he doesn't turn up soon I shall think that the damned Yankees have resented his last demand. Lew could be most unreasonable."

It was these words which halted Randall and made him think better of the purpose to ease his loneliness with companionship. Who was Lew? he asked himself. He had less than a minute to wait for his answer.

"It's a risky way of getting money that Lew follows," another voice answered. "I warned him against that kind of thing, but Lew enjoys excitement."

"If I could rob them to my heart's content they would have nothing left but a chastened spirit," said he of the musical voice. "They are stealing us poor with their tariffs and nigger thieves. There's an army of our niggers on old Brown's farm somewhere in this endless forest. What a noble and romantic enterprise if we could capture them and take them back to their owners!"

"On our next trip we shall do it," the other answered. "In my view the war has already begun. Old Brown started it. So we are only playing the part of good scouts. I learned to-day that the big nigger farm is north of here near a lake called Placid. I shall find it and map the trails. Then when our band is organized I shall know how to lead them. Unlike Brown, we shall be seizing our own property. Who resists us will be resisting the law of the land. We'll take them aboard a ship on the St. Lawrence and out to sea, or through Lake Champlain and the Hudson to New York. The big river can not be far from Placid. I shall know all the routes in a month or so."

Again the deep resonant tone of the other thrilled the boy as it carried these words to his ear:

"When Lincoln is elected, as he will surely be, the reign of Cæsar begins. We know what to expect from him and his black Republican followers—a nigger uprising and then hell.

" 'Brutus had rather be a villager
Than to repute himself a son of Rome
Under these hard conditions as this time
Is like to lay upon us.' "

These rhythmic words and the voice that spoke them the boy long remembered. The dialogue had ended. The strangers had lain down to sleep.

" 'Now Sleep, soft-fingered Sleep, attend us,' " that voice added. "And long before the cock crows we must be on our way."

Randall retreated cautiously to the shore of the pond, where he lay down on deep moss under the tamaracks.

He did not sleep until, far in the night, he heard the strangers leaving. Then he slept until Teaser awoke him with the wiggling and sniffing of a dog delighted at finding his lost master.

Tyke was on her feet, eager for food and water. He took the bandage from her ankle and saw to his great relief that the swelling was nearly gone. She favored it very little when he led her out and watered her as he had done before with the aid of an old bucket which had lain in the cabin.

He had found a line and some fish hooks on a cork in one of the saddle-bags. He cut a pole and discovered a few worms under an old chopping block. A raft was anchored in the pond a few yards from the shore. He rolled a big spruce log into the water and rode it to the raft, pushing with his pole butt on the bottom. There in a short time he caught half a dozen trout and brought them ashore.

In the cook-house he found many damaged dishes and an old skillet. He cleaned the skillet and half a broken platter, and, when the fish were ready, with the help of a little package of smoked ham out of his provender bag, he cooked them and had a breakfast which was to be one of the most agreeable items in his memory of that trip. Another was the note which he had found pinned to the door of the camp in which the strangers had talked and slept. It was hastily scribbled with a pencil, and said:

Lew: I have gone north. The Captain south. He will wait for you two days at the house of our red-haired friend. Spangler.

A large bough bed in the cabin indicated that the strangers had been there before. Randall suspected that Lew was the arrested highwayman. He put the letter in his wallet for a souvenir of a bad night.

He began to ponder over the talk of the strangers. The meaning of it became clear to him. He had heard of the growing bitterness which imperiled the Union. But until now that had been a thing in which he had had no part. He had read in the *Ledger* of John Brown's adventure and death at Harper's Ferry, and had heard of his big farm in the woods where many negroes were said to be clearing and cultivating its land. The strangers whom he had overheard were southern men trying to locate the farm with the purpose of leading a raid upon it.

He had heard his grandfather use strong words against slavery. Now it had spoken in his presence. So, when he mounted the mare to resume his journey, the great issue had begun to warm his blood.

As he rode along he tried to imitate the sound of that eloquent voice which he had heard in the darkness, and was able to recall those words of Brutus which showed as clearly as deer tracks in new snow on the tablet of his memory. Who was Brutus, anyhow? he asked himself, and later he asked a kindly horseman whom he overtook on the road. It was then that he learned for the first time of the glory of old Rome and the end of Julius Cæsar. They were nearing the prosperous village of Utica. The stranger, who was the editor of its leading newspaper—a genial young man of the name of Bailey—took an interest in the boy, the dog and the horse.

"Who are you, and where do you come from, my boy?" the man asked.

"I am Randall Hope of Hopkinton."

"Hopkinton! Where is Hopkinton?"

The boy gave his new friend a look of surprise and pity.

"It is the biggest town in St. Lawrence County, sir," he answered.

"St. Lawrence County! That is a long way north. And why have you hopped out of Hopkinton?"

There was a playful smile on the kindly face of the stranger.

"I am going to Virginia to visit my uncle."

"Virginia! That is a long way south!"

Dogs were barking at the gate of a dooryard just ahead. As usual, when danger threatened, the small dog Teaser leaped to his master's foot and was caught by the nape of his neck and pulled to a position of safety on the blanket behind the saddle.

"Randall Hope, I like you and your dog and the noble young mare you are riding," said Mr. Bailey. "But as to Hopkinton, I prefer to jump at no conclusion until I have seen it."

As a result of his liking for the trio of travelers, Mr. Bailey invited them to accept the hospitality of his home for the night. This Randall was glad to do. It was a fortunate meeting.

His new friends gave him the warm welcome and affectionate care that such a homeless, gentle, honest-hearted lad was entitled to from good folk, and he gave them an account of his adventures on the road and much amusement in doing so, it must be inferred, for even after old age and great honors had fallen on his head, Mr. Bailey loved to tell of the lad, the horse and the dog from Hopkinton. But now the lad was about to enter a trail in which the dog and horse could not travel, for, after supper, the editor took his young friend to hear a lecture by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Of this great man Randall was ashamed to confess he had no knowledge. He simply went along with his host and hostess and held his peace. While the white-haired prophet spoke the eager soul of the boy got its first baptism in the mysterious fountain of personality. Like unto a sower, scattering his seed in good soil, the great man was striding across the continent in those days. The theme of his lecture was *The Time*. Its procession of ideas he had presented some twenty years before. He ventured to repeat them because the day of fulfillment would seem to be near. And now, long after the reaping which astonished the world, let us look at his seed:

He said that the human voice was the great channel of the supernatural and that strong personalities were the agents of God in the making of history. The Time was walking about in hopeful natures. Perhaps even in the brain of a fanatic, in the wild hope of some simple mountain boy, in the love glance of a girl, in the sensitive conscience of some eccentric person who has discovered a new scruple to embarrass himself and his neighbors, would be found what was to fill the time to come.

It was a time of intellectual pioneers. Old reputations were withering and passing away. Soon there would arrive a bolder spirit, a surrendered soul, more informed and led by God and filled with His patience than any other—much in advance of all the rest, even quite beyond their sympathy, who would hold in his vision the general fulness of the time to come.

Resisting the degradation of man to measures he would act with patience and truth and a cold neglect of prudence. No words would be strong enough to express his sense of the sacredness of private integrity. He would lead the world to its new position.

In the half moment of silence which followed these prophetic words an unspoken query was in the thought of the crowd. "Who—who is to have this high-led, surrendered soul?"

The fury with which the slave trader defended every inch of his bloody deck and howling auction platform was a trumpet to alarm the ear of mankind and awake the dull. The conscience of the time was then in training. The origin of all change was in that mysterious fountain.

The revolutions that impended were not then from ambition and rapacity but from a great aim to reorganize life and make all property an honorable possession. There had been never so great a thought laboring in the breast of man.

It almost seemed that what was, aforetime, spoken fabulously was soon to be plainly and seriously asserted: the doctrine, namely, of the indwelling of the Creator in man—the great spirit gazing through the Time and seeking hospitality in the hearts of men.

This was Mr. Bailey's report of the prophetic lecture, a proof of which was put in Randall's hands.

Its ideas, not yet fully comprehended, began knocking at the door of the boy's mind. Something big had come down that channel of the prophet's voice and entered the soul of the keen-minded country lad, there to remain and to grow.

CHAPTER III

RANDALL, TYKE AND TEASER RESUME THEIR JOURNEY

NEXT morning Randall and the editor breakfasted at seven. An hour later the man and boy set out together in the saddle, Teaser on his blanket behind his master. They were on their way to the office of the editor. When they had arrived there Mr. Bailey dismounted, saying:

"If you will wait here a few minutes I will put you on your road."

The editor returned quickly and said:

"A constable has been here looking for you. The first letter I opened contains an ad from him for a boy and a black dog traveling with a blaze-faced, four-year-old mare. You must be off. If he learns you have passed he may take the nine o'clock train and try to catch you at Herkimer. Probably he will not, but anyhow, if the train should pass you, turn back. There is little danger of that. It is generally an hour late. At Herkimer turn to the right on the gravel turnpike. It will take you away from the railroad and the magnetic telegraph line. Be careful until you cross into Pennsylvania. Then you are safe."

He put the boy on his road and bade him Godspeed and returned to his office. It was then within a few minutes of train time and Randall rode on at a brisk trot. He was within a mile or so of Herkimer when he heard the train coming. Trains were nearly as undependable and noisy as a young man sowing his wild oats those days. Randall helped the dog to the ground saying:

"Teaser, we've got to scratch gravel."

The puffing, bellowing locomotive was close upon them when Tyke had begun to show her best pace. She was on a smooth dry clay and gravel road which, for some miles, ran parallel with the track, and not a stone's throw from it. Looking back over his shoulder Randall saw Constable Beach of Hopkinton—Blue Beach they called him there because of his unusual gift for profanity—leaning out of the engine cab. The train was rocking and roaring on the iron rails. The mare was drawing away from it. The clatter of her hoofs was drowned by the noise. The dog was close behind her, stretched with speed.

A young bull feeding on the roadside and hearing the roar and clatter behind him took fright and began to run. With tail lifted he ran ahead of the mare as if in fear of his life. She was close behind him when he leaped the fence and galloped down the track ahead of the train, now adding the sound of its whistle to the uproar. The bull clung to the track, fearing to take the time to leave it, and the train had to slow up. As he went on the boy heard the grinding of its brakes. So it happened that Randall won the race to Herkimer.

In the edge of the village Randall pulled up and Teaser, who was showing signs of distress, was helped to the boy's lap. He turned into the south road and gave the mare her head. Without urging she seemed to get, from the feel of her rider, a sense of what was needed and kept busy pushing the road behind her.

In less than a quarter of an hour Constable Beach on a fresh mount came in sight of the fugitive three and called to them in a loud voice. A decisive moment in the career of Randall Hope had arrived. The filly had heard the call and the hurrying hoofs behind her. The boy had no need to ask her to do her part in making the history of that day in the life of the three travelers. She was able to hold the gap of some twenty rods between her and her pursuer. Then slowly it began to widen. The stamina of the Morgan breed was showing. Ahead he saw a gang of men working and the river. They held up their hands as he came near.

"The bridge is up," one of them shouted. The race had come to its end, apparently.

"Must I go back to be the slave of Ezra Town?" the boy asked himself.

The working men were massed in the road ahead of him. The filly swung into the siding at their right and unable to check her speed leaped the fence and went on down a slope of pasture land toward the river. Swollen by rains it was then a noisy, boiling flood sweeping toward a line where it tumbled over and between rocks to a lower level. Randall pressed on, wondering if the mare would have the courage for such a crossing.

Randall stopped a moment to take Teaser in his arms. Then he headed the mare toward her trial. With no hesitation she waded in, took the deep water and began her battle against the rushing current. For a time Randall was in great fear of being swept into the seething dip below. Tyke was not fifty feet above it when, having fought her way across the channel, her feet struck bottom and she began to slip and lurch as she picked her footing over a rocky shoal. In a moment she had gained the shore where she stood puffing and shaking herself.

Randall let her breathe a moment while he waved his hand at the constable who stood looking at him on the farther shore. He felt secure now, knowing that Mr. Beach was a burden too heavy for any horse to carry in the soft and dangerous going he had been through.

In a moment the mare went on as if she had found refreshment in her bath. Her blood had told in the great trial of that day. Randall Hope could never quite express his love of her and of the mighty breed from which she sprang. He spent the night in thick woods far southward and went on in the morning.

That day he passed many wagons on their way to the oil regions, and near sundown stopped at a farmhouse beyond the Pennsylvania border. The farm was kept by a cheerful man with a long brown beard and a sad countenance who was pulling weeds in a garden by the roadside near a small dwelling as the boy came along.

"Could you keep a stranger over night?" Randall asked.

Without looking up the man answered:

"Like as not and I don't believe you'd spoil before mornin'. But fust I want to know what kind of a cuss you be."

He came to the mare's side and looked up into Randall's face. Then he acted like one who had made a big discovery.

"Well, by the great horn spoon!" he exclaimed. "Where do you come from?"

"St. Lawrence County, New York," the boy answered.

"Well, by the little horn spoon! I guess you're a good Republican?"

"Yes, sir."

"An' what do ye think o' slavery?"

"I think it's a curse."

"I knew it. I was sure of it. By the middle-sized horn spoon! Put her there. I like to meet a sound thinker. Come in. Only sound thinkers are asked to eat at my table. Even then there might be some jawin' done. Do you mind bein' jawed a little?"

The boy stared at the stranger with a smile, not quite knowing what to make of him.

"You won't be bruised er scratched er bit," the man went on with a lowered tone, "but you're liable to be jawed a little. You won't git no reg'lar goin' over like I do now an' then, an' I guess I deserve it, but I wouldn't wonder if you'd git a cuff or two. Ye see, comin' into our house is like joinin' the Free Masons. Ye don't know what's goin' to happen. My ol' womern is kind o' nervous an' she 'pears to think there's too many men in the world. Her idee is that one is enough an' that he needs watchin'. She's as good a womern as ever stepped in shoe leather, an' prob'ly you'll find it out just as I have. All ye got to do is let her do the talkin' an' keep still."

He went with the boy to the stable and while Randall was rubbing the legs and body of the mare the stranger continued his talk as follows:

"I've been married now twenty-eight year. I've had a thorough schoolin', I can tell ye. On the subject o' women I'm perfect—right up at the head o' the class, as ye might say. When they're cross you keep still an' you'll learn things 'bout yerself an' men in general that you never dreamed of an' most of it'll be true. When she's good-natured it's time fer you to talk. Oh, ye got to use judgment with a nervous womern just as ye have with a skittish hoss or git yer buggy smashed.

"If I didn't use judgment there'd be some fur flyin' 'round here. It's wonderful how silence an' a cool head can help along. Generally we're as happy as a pair o' turtle doves. Often I tell her how much I think o' her. She'll smile an' purtend she don't believe a word of it, but she'll enjoy it like readin' a story book an' that day she'll start a new pair o' socks fer me an' I'll git strawberry shortcake er apple er mince pie fer dinner. I'm always thinkin' up things to say when the clouds break an' the sun begins to shine in at the winders."

As they were walking toward the house followed by Teaser the man turned to the boy and said:

"I suppose you'll have to know my name. Somethin' is goin' to be throwed into your memory that'll make a good deal of a splash an' settle down to the bottom an' stay there. Take a deep breath an' stand firm on yer feet an' don't be scairt. It's Slats—Joseph Israel Slats. Ain't that a rattle-trap of a name? It's all I got from my parents an' I guess you'll think it enough. I don't know what else to do with it so I git as much fun out of it as I can. Mostly 'round here they call me Joe. In the village they put on the Slats an' leave out Israel. I suppose you'll have to call me Mister Slats, bein' that we ain't very well acquainted. Say, there's one thing that you ought to know."

He paused, looking into the boy's face with a smile as he put some tobacco into the bowl of his pipe.

"It's this, my son: when his heart is touched Slats can be depended on to do what he can. Say, I don't want to have to whistle when I speak to a man. What's your name?"

"Randall Hope," the boy answered and then he proudly added: "I come from the town of Hopkinton."

"Randall Hope, you'll weather the storm all right, but I don't know 'bout the dog. I wouldn't want to guarantee the dog. He might live through it an' he might not. Is he a strong dog?"

"Oh, Teaser will sleep in the mare's manger," said Randall. "He's broke to that."

"There's no tellin' what she might say er do. Let him come in. Like as not she'll take to him after the first thunder-clap. Is he a dog o' good principles?"

"Yes, sir."

The man, the boy and the dog entered the house. Thick thunder clouds in the west had hastened the twilight. A lamp, just lighted, stood on a table set for supper. A slim, neatly dressed woman some fifty years of age was working over a hot stove. She did not look up as her husband entered with his two guests. Mr. Slats winked at Randall. He approached the stove and said in a low gentle voice:

"Mirandy, here is a boy an' his dog from St. Lawrence County. They've traveled all day long an' they're tired an' hungry."

"More mouths for me to feed!" the woman snapped as she stepped energetically from the stove to the table and back without looking at the man or the boy.

Mr. Slats winked again. Randall stood near his host, embarrassed by those inhospitable words. Mrs. Slats went on with her work for a moment without speaking or looking up. Then she said with her eyes still on the frying ham:

"Well, why don't you give him a chair?"

"Say, I'm fergittin' my manners," said Mr. Slats, and then he took Randall to the wash-basin on the back porch and when they had returned bade him take a chair and make himself at home.

As she turned the ham the woman said to her husband in a somewhat milder tone:

"You better go out on the road an' see if there ain't somebody else you can bring in fer me to feed an' wait on."

In a moment she added: "I don't believe there's another womern in this town would stan' it—I declare I don't."

Randall was about to say that he had food enough in his saddle-bags and that the hay-mow was the only bed he needed when a curious thing happened.

Teaser, deeply interested by the grateful odor of the frying meat, cautiously approached Mrs. Slats as if he recognized her authority in the premises and stood up, his paws drooped before his breast—a hungry, weary suppliant—as Randall had seen him often standing in the kitchen at home, before the boy's mother, after a hard day in the woods. The woman turned and stood with her hands on her hips looking down at him. Then she said:

"Well, I declare! You ain't the first black beggar I've seen in this house."

Teaser held his pose with a pleading look and expressed his great need in a low bark.

She turned and looked down at him again.

"Well, of all things!" she exclaimed. A smile came to her face as she added: "You're the cunnin'est critter I ever see in my life."

She pushed back the frying pan and hurried into the pantry. Mr. Slats touched Randall's leg with his toe, a look of glad triumph in his face. Mrs. Slats returned quickly with a number of cookies and a doughnut in her hands and began to feed Teaser while her husband took her place at the frying pan. In a moment she was kneeling on the floor at the dog's side petting him as he ate from her hand. Her manner had softened.

"Goodness!" she exclaimed. "He's as hungry as a bear."

Mr. Slats had put the ham on the platter and rolled the baked potatoes out of the oven on a plate while his wife was engaged with the dog. When they were sitting down to supper Teaser jumped into a chair at the table.

"I guess I'd better take him out to the barn," said Randall.

"I guess you'd better not," Mrs. Slats answered, in a decisive tone. "He can set here by me. I've had worse company."

"I didn't intend to bother you this way," Randall remarked in a tone of apology. "There's plenty of food in the saddle-bags and I like to sleep on hay."

For the first time she looked into the boy's face. Then, in her own way, she apologized, saying mildly:

"I wouldn't 'a' minded at all only to-night I expect we'll have comp'ny, Mr. Slats bein' forty-five year old to-day an' we'll have to fix up a little after supper."

"You must let me do up the dishes while you get ready," Randall proposed. "I've been used to helping in the house."

Mrs. Slats looked rather tenderly into his eyes and asked:

"Say, for goodness' sake! How old are you?"

"Eighteen," the boy answered.

"Just the age our Will would 'a' been," she said musingly. "Eyes blue like his was—hair the same color!"

"That's what I was thinkin' when he come along an' I stepped down to the mare's side an' looked into his face," Mr. Slats confessed.

"You're awful young to be travelin' off so fur from hum," said the woman. "Father an' mother livin'?"

"My father is dead."

"An' yer mother married ag'in?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. An' I'll bet you've got a mean step-father."

"We don't agree."

"Uh huh!" Mrs. Slats exclaimed with a nod of her head as if all this had only confirmed her suspicions. "It generally turns out that way."

Mr. Slats and Randall did up the dishes while Mrs. Slats went to her bedroom to get ready, as she put it. Randall observed that Mr. Slats shook his head and chuckled to himself more or less, when his hands were in the dish pan, and once he gave the boy a playful tap in the ribs and contorted his face in a wink, full of joyous self-congratulation.

The neighbors began arriving at eight o'clock and soon the house overflowed with a company of boys and girls and men and women. The boy from St. Lawrence County was introduced to all these merry folk and for the first time he felt that wonderful thing, of which Mr. Emerson had spoken in his lecture, "the love glance of a girl." The girl was Nancy Thorn of the neighboring village of Bridgewater—a girl of his own age—daughter of Elijah Thorn, banker and pork merchant representing a great firm of Cincinnati packers. Mr. Slats had introduced Nancy to Randall as "the pride of the county."

Not until then had the big fine lad seen a girl of distinguished beauty and charm. Here in the *Memories* of Randall Hope, of which, before now, the historian has had occasion to speak, he has presented her portrait and given a hint of the young dream it started.

"She stood to my shoulder and the face and form of her I find it hard to describe, for I am not schooled in the use of fine words," he wrote. "Her eyes were big and dark with lashes like those of a young doe. I have read somewhere of the arrows in the eye of youth. That night I felt them, and I think that she felt them. Her skin was fair, her cheeks red, her teeth white and even, her voice like the song of a bobolink —it was that full of happiness. Her hair which hung in curls was thick and brown—light brown—with threads of gold in it."

He was looking at a sweet girl of seventeen and out of the eyes of youth, it must be remembered, and so there may be some lack of restraint in his words. But their sincerity is not to be doubted or the unusual beauty of the maiden to whom they relate. Of all that there is other and conclusive evidence. He sat alone with her and a young friend of hers in the dooryard that evening under a new moon, the sky aglow with stars, and told of his travels and destination.

"I am sure that you will not like Virginia. They have slavery there," Nancy Thorn remarked.

"We have slavery too in the North," Randall answered. "If I do not like Virginia I shall go to Springfield, Illinois, where my Uncle Josiah lives."

"We are going to Illinois," said Nancy. "My father has sold out his business. We are going to make the trip in the saddle just for the fun of it. A team and wagon will go along to carry our baggage. You must go to Illinois."

"Maybe I will," the boy answered, immensely pleased by such a command from her.

"How do you happen to be stopping here?"

"Oh, night and I got here about the same time. I had to stop somewhere, and Mr. and Mrs. Slats took me in."

"They are interesting people," said the girl. "Everybody likes Mr. Slats—he is so funny and so good-hearted. My father says that he was with John Brown in Kansas."

The boy did not then know what it meant to have been with John Brown in Kansas.

"How long shall you stay here?" the girl asked.

"I shall be going on right after breakfast in the morning."

Their talk ended, for they were summoned to come in and have some doughnuts and cider, while Mr. Slats told how it felt to be five-and-forty to the great amusement of his neighbors, who soon went away, each having left gifts, some of which were intended only to provoke a laugh.

When Randall arose at daylight he told his host that he had had a wakeful night. It may well have been the first wakeful night in his history. He went to the stable to feed and water Tyke and groom her for the work of the day. When he climbed to the hayloft he heard the crying of a baby in a dusky corner of it, and here he found a negro and his wife and baby lying on the hay.

"We done come in the night, massa," the man said in a frightened voice.

The boy had been startled by his discovery, but the negro's voice reassured him. He knew that they were fugitive slaves and his heart had been touched by the look of them.

"I will tell Mr. Slats and I think he will bring some food to you," Randall answered.

He fed and watered the mare and hurried to the cow stable where he could hear Mr. Slats whistling as he worked, and told of his discovery. His host rose from his milking stool, set down his pail and whispered:

"Don't say a word about this to a livin' soul. Not many get this fur, but when they do they find food an' shelter an' help. They're human bein's just like the rest of us an' they've been misused wicked—some of 'em. They know that Slats will do what he can."

When the chores were done Mr. Slats took the boy to a hitching-post, by the roadside in front of the house, painted white.

"You're an honest boy an' I'm a goin' to trust ye," the man said. "Here is the station sign. It's that white post yonder. You could see it in the darkest night if you tried. Now go an' feel the back of it just as ye would if it was dark an' ye couldn't see. What do ye feel there?"

"A cross."

"That's right an' when the fingers o' the homeless wanderer feel it he knows that Christ's compassion can be found in this house. You must have seen those white posts here an' there along the road."

Randall remembered having seen them.

"Now if you should see any poor abused niggers down there in Virginia who want to get away, you help 'em if you can an' tell 'em 'bout the posted road. I'll give ye a map of it."

When Randall had thanked Mrs. Slats and said good-by to her at the back door, before getting into the saddle, she slipped a pair of wool socks into his pocket and gave him a package of cookies and cheese and smoked ham to go in his saddle-bags. There were tears in her eyes when she put her hands upon his shoulders, drew him close to her and kissed his cheek.

"You make me think of my boy," she whispered. "You're just about as he would 'a' been if he had 'a' lived—just as I've pictured him to myself when I set here knittin' in the rockin' chair. Many a day I'll be thinkin' o' you an' prayin' fer ye."

Mr. Slats walked beside him, as he sat in the saddle, to the roadside, and said:

"If any one follers you he'll git stopped an' lied to more or less. Say, I'm glad o' one thing—ye didn't go till ye got 'quainted with one o' the best women that ever stood in shoe leather."

Randall set out with Teaser on the blanket behind him, the town of Bridgewater being only a mile ahead, and with a memory enriched by the night's experience.

A short distance beyond the village he saw two girls riding toward him. They were Nancy Thorn and her girl friend.

"We knew that you would be coming and we thought that we would surprise you," said Nancy as she turned her horse and took the road beside him. "I hope you don't mind."

"No, I am glad to see you," he answered.

"I think you ought to say something very nice," the girl remarked as she looked into his eyes with a smile. "We got up early and came out on purpose to meet you."

The bashful lad was getting his first lesson in the gentle art of the courtier.

"I wish you—you were going all the way with me," he answered rather awkwardly.

She laughed and then smiled at him as she said: "I don't believe you know much about girls."

"I've never seen many girls. I've never seen one that I really liked until—until I saw you."

This odd confession had fallen out almost by accident. He was blushing.

"I like that," she answered with a playful look at him. "It is something to remember you by, if we don't meet again."

"But we shall. I am sure that we shall meet again."

"It depends upon you," she said with a serious look. Then she stopped her horse and held out her hand saying: "Good-by. You may write to me if you care to."

"I will write as soon as I get to my uncle's," he answered.

She patted Tyke's head.

"What a beautiful horse!" she exclaimed.

"Do you like her?" Randall asked.

"I love her. What a proud head! What a coat of silk! What wavy, jet black plumes! I'd like to ride her."

"And you may when I come to Illinois."

"Don't disappoint me," she entreated as she leaned over and gave Teaser a loving shake with her hand.

The girls turned their horses and rode slowly toward the village. Both they and the boy, as the distance grew between them, looked back, waving adieux until thick woods at a bend had cut off their vision. Then with all these new things in his heart Randall Hope rode on toward Virginia.

CHAPTER IV

THE PLANTATION OF RODERICK HOPE

THERE is no record of further adventures on that journey. He toiled over mountain roads, spending his nights in comfort at inns and farm-houses on the main highways. The twentieth of June, we learn from his letter of that date to Nancy Thorn, he reached the large plantation house of his uncle in the valley of the Shenandoah. The ample grounds were thronged with people. A colored groom in livery who met him at the door and conducted him to the stables said that his master had been married twenty-five years that day and was having a celebration.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. A barbecue was in progress. The guests were sitting under the trees and in the shadow of the great house to escape the burning heat of the sun. Most of them were dressed in white. Tables on the lawn held roasted meats and salads and cakes and jellies and bowls of punch and bottles of wine. Negroes in livery were serving. There was a sound of violins and happy voices in the great hall. A negro chorus was singing in a grove back of the house. The melodies it sang were softened by a distance sufficient to make their music a pleasant background for conversation.

Randall found his Uncle Roderick, surrounded by a group of merry gentlemen, all dressed in soft linen and sitting in the shadow of a large tree. They were smoking and in the happy, pot-valiant stage of tipsiness. Roderick Hope embraced the boy and then said, as he waved his gold headed cane in the air:

"Here is a boy from St. Lawrence County, the great Republican stronghold of the North."

"Where in hell is St. Lawrence County?" was the merry question of one of his friends.

"Sir, it is not in hell. It's in upper New York State," Roderick Hope answered.

"I beg your pardon. Everything north of New York City is supposed to be across the border," the other answered, and his words raised a loud laugh. "But, boy," he added as he shook hands with Randall, "fortunately you are too young to have any politics."

"I am a Republican," Randall answered.

"And so young and beautiful! It is too bad," the man went on, and added in a solemn voice and with a noble gesture: "But, boy, although you have bad politics, you have a good uncle who is one of the best men in this grand old state. Therefore we take you to our bosoms. We forgive you. We entertain regret for your past and hope for your future."

Such was Randall's introduction to the plantation of his uncle. There he heard men talking seriously of breaking up the Union and forming a confederacy of southern states. Soon a boy of his own age joined the party and was introduced to Randall as "your cousin George."

George was polite but not cordial to the boy from the North.

"Take him to your mother and see that he has what he wants to eat," Roderick Hope commanded.

Randall, who was covered with dust, told his cousin that he would like to be washed and brushed before seeing his aunt. "If I had known about the party I would have bought some new clothes before I got here," Randall apologized.

"Oh, don't worry about your clothes!" George answered as they made their way toward the house. "No one can be expected to look pretty after a long ride."

Although feeling the icy coolness of his cousin, Randall admired the look of him, for he was handsomely dressed, and had fine manners. They went to "the water room," where Randall washed and combed his hair and brushed his clothes. Then they proceeded to the great hall. There the young people, rather closely embraced, in the fashion which prevailed at the great hotels in Saratoga, and against which sundry churchmen had protested in the *New York Tribune*, were waltzing. Randall was presented to his Aunt Elizabeth and to her daughters Phyllis and Susanne. Each of these ladies gave him a hearty greeting and a kiss of welcome. His aunt was a woman of real tact.

"Will you let me present you to our friends?" she asked.

Randall blushed as he looked down at his rough boots and worn breeches.

"I see. It would embarrass you," she whispered. "Never mind. You shall meet them later."

Turning to George she said, "Take Randall to the paddock. Have Mingo and Pete saddled and let Thomas Jefferson show him around the place."

To the boy's relief this was done. Thomas Jefferson proved to be a handsome negro lad of about Randall's age and size, so white that no northern observer would have suspected that he had negro blood in him. Only the color of the eyes and the cut of the mouth suggested without indicating it. The latter was just a trifle larger and fuller lipped than the mouth of the average white man of good breeding; his hair was not quite straight but wavy like Randall's. He had, too, the white man's voice and manner. Randall and he set out together on a pair of handsome horses to see the big plantation.

"Are you a slave?" Randall asked.

"Yes, I'm Mrs. Hope's nigger."

"Do you enjoy your life?"

"How could I, sir? We live too much like cattle in the quarters and I am longing, always longing for something I can not have. It is something which I, as a human being, have a right to long for, I reckon, and yet I must not complain."

"What is it?"

"Education, sir."

"Can you read?"

"Yes, I have taught myself to read. One of the young ladies gave me a primer and other books and helped me a lot. I have worked mostly in the big house among white folks."

Randall was astonished at his way of speaking. The negro boy had the voice, manner and carriage of Roderick Hope. They were riding around the big place until the sun was low.

When they returned the guests had departed. No member of the family was in sight. Negroes were cleaning up the grounds. Teaser was asleep in Tyke's manger. Randall brought food and water for the dog and saw that the mare was well cared for. A maid met him at the front door of the big mansion, now strangely silent, and conducted him to his room.

Alone in the room he was homesick and depressed. A copy of Marshall's *Life of Washington* lay on a table at his bedside. He had begun to forget his wretchedness in the story of the great Virginian when a maid came with his supper on a tray. At the party he had refused to eat, not feeling the need of food in his excitement, and now he was hungry. The supper was a comfort to him. Later a tub and pails of water were brought by the maid for his bath. He bathed and went to bed early and lay awake until after eleven, thinking of his home and of Nancy Thorn and trying in vain with the book and the light of a candle at his bedside to increase his knowledge of the life of Washington. By and by he arose and went to a writing-desk and wrote the letter to Nancy referred to at the beginning of this chapter.

There was a little book on the desk entitled *The Model Letter Writer*. He spent a few moments reading certain of the model letters, especially one "From a young man to a young lady in whom he has become interested." It was full of big words, the meaning of which was not clear to him.

"I am not going to trust any words that I am not acquainted with," he said to himself. "They might make a fool of me. But I guess it would be all right to say 'with kind regards to your mother and father.' I don't know exactly what regards are, but I guess I'll take a chance on them."

So in his own way of phrasing he wrote:

I am here. At least I am partly here. My mind keeps running away. I find it far up the north road. It isn't willing to stay with me. It has driven me out of bed to write this letter to you at half past eleven. I wonder what's the matter with it. It has been trying to make me believe that you would be glad to hear from me. I think I will write another letter to my mother and grandfather. My mind keeps jumping from Bridgewater to Hopkinton and back. It will not stay in Virginia. It says that Virginia is no place for me. So, before snow flies, you will probably see me in Illinois. I hope so.

There were some half a dozen lines about the journey from Bridgewater down and the letter ended with kind regards to her father and mother and to Mr. and Mrs. Slats.

"I don't know whether you want my regards or not," he added. "If not, make it anything you like, and I'll agree. I don't know much about regards anyway, but I guess they're all right."

This brief letter shows the frankness and originality of the boy Randall. "Regards don't cost much, so I'm going to send 'em to everybody I like when I get a chance," he said to himself.

Next morning his uncle met him at breakfast, but the ladies and his cousin George did not appear. There was a bottle at his uncle's plate, from which he took what he called an "appetizer," and hospitably offered it to the boy.

"No," Randall answered, a little shocked by the tender. "I belong to the Sons of Temperance."

While they were eating his uncle undertook to enlighten him on slavery and the grievances of the South. As he talked, Randall observed that he tapped on his breast with the forefinger of his right hand, touching a point about an inch below his diamond sparkler. The northern people were wrong in thinking that the negroes were mistreated or dissatisfied. They were not like white folks. They were born to be slaves and they were mostly happy in that condition. It was the agitation in the North which had made some of them discontented, not their treatment. His niggers were all devoted to him. He spoke of the tariff which protected and enriched the wealthy manufacturers of New England at the expense of the rest of the country.

"And those sharp New Englanders who brought the niggers from Africa and sold 'em to the South have now decided that it's all wrong for any one to have slaves. They want to take 'em away from us and make 'em free."

"Those old slavers were bad men," said Randall. "You can't blame all New England for their crimes. They've been dead a long while. Anyway, I think that the government should pay for the slaves."

This much Randall had learned from the talk of his grandfather and when he had knowledge he spoke out bravely in all his talks at the family table in Virginia.

Mr. Hope gave the fountain of his feelings a tap of unusual violence. An oath came out of it, then an apology mingled with an amiable smile of toleration: "My son, you are young. Let me tell you something The government couldn't buy our niggers. Our whole life is founded on the slave system. We couldn't get along without it. You might as well talk of buying our soil and scooping it up and sending it away."

"But it's wrong to have slaves," Randall insisted.

Roderick Hope arose with a look of impatience. The waiter gave him his shining, gold headed cane. Mr. Hope raised this symbol of his wealth and power in front of him until its glowing handle was even with his eyes. As he spoke he gave it a little shake of warning.

"My son," he said, "don't let me hear any more of your nonsense. If you talk like that in this state people will think you are light-headed. It will offend them. We know here that the negro is fit only for bondage."

The boy held his peace. Now for the first time he had come to a moment when he was afraid to speak his mind. It was to him a galling moment. Swiftly his uncle's manner changed.

"Come, let us take a ride," he proposed amiably, and with a gentle smile.

The horses were waiting at the door. They rode through the fields of the plantation where many negroes were at work, and Randall was introduced to the superintendent, a big, hard-faced, black-eyed man with iron-gray hair and a long scar on his cheek, of the name of Wilkins, whose mouth was always filled with tobacco and whose speech was often interrupted by expectoration. He carried a knife and a pistol in his belt.

"Wilkins is the king of this plantation," said Roderick Hope as they rode on. "Even I have to move when he speaks."

"Why does he carry a knife and a pistol in his belt?"

"Oh, now and then we get a bad nigger," Mr. Hope answered. "The first you know he'll put cheap whisky in him and go to cutting up and before he's done with it he may cut up every one in his reach. Did you see that scar on Wilkins' face? Well, a bad nigger did that. If Wilkins hadn't had a pistol he would have been cut to ribbons. A man in charge of a big plantation has to be able to take care of himself."

They came, by and by, to a kennel of big bloodhounds. It reminded Randall of the thrilling escape of Eliza in *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* which the boy had read the winter before.

"What are they for?" he asked.

"Well, you see, now and then a nigger tries to run away. That's when the hounds are useful. Anyhow, if we have the hounds they're not so apt to try it."

"I thought you said that they were happy here," Randall answered.

"My son, they *are* happy, but among the happiest people you'll often find some fellow who doesn't know when he's well off. There's a lot of fool niggers who have heard of what is going on in the North. As happy as they are here they get the notion in their heads that they could be happier up there among the nigger lovers. They are beginning to get restless."

Young Randall Hope did not like his Uncle Roderick. The ear of youth is quick to discover the note of insincerity. Mr. Hope was a member of the English church in the near city, yet he gambled and swore and drank to excess, and the keen intellect of the boy was soon aware that he was guilty of another offense unspeakably base. Yet it must not be supposed that Roderick Hope was a type of man that was peculiar to the South. His was a type which had been familiar in old England and was not unknown to New England—a type of which John Milton had written:

> A wealthy man addicted to his pleasure and his profits finds religion to be a traffic so entangled and of so many piddling accounts that he cannot skill to keep a stock going in that trade. So he finds a factor to whom he can commit the whole managing of his religious affairs. He entertains his Religion and gives him good dinners and many gifts. His Religion walks abroad at 8, leaving his kind entertainer in the shop trading all day without Him.

So it was with Roderick Hope. He contributed generously to the support of the church. He gave the rector good dinners and many gifts and for all that the rector was supposed to assume responsibility for the eternal welfare of Mr. Hope. For that part of his business the rich planter had little time.

Randall liked his aunt better. She was a humorous, rapid talking, kindly woman with dark eyes and hair. She often referred to her husband as "The Giant," and regarded most men as incorrigible, but so necessary that they had to be put up with. She treated the northern prejudices of the boy Randall with good-natured tolerance and soon became fond of him. She went with him to the tailor when he bought his new clothes to see that they were well fitted, and drove him around the countryside introducing him to her friends as "a real, live, untamed Yankee from the 'blackest Republican County in the North.' "

The older people were always polite to him and often touched his heart with kindness. They took only a playful exception to his politics. Those of his own age were not so bland. They were inclined to challenge and bitterly oppose his opinions and often with open contempt. That, indeed, was the attitude of his cousins.

Of all the boys and girls that he had met since arriving in that community there were only two or three that he liked. Ruth Dorsey, of about his own age, the daughter of a wealthy planter, was one of them. Her mother had given a party for the young northerner. A number of boys from the Virginia Military Institute lately liberated for their summer vacation were visiting the Dorseys. Ruth had come to Randall's defense when the whole company had begun hostilities. Some rather high words had passed that evening between him and other boys as to whether the South could whip the North.

This led to what Randall called "the first battle of the uncivil war." It came off the next Saturday evening in a grove on the Hope plantation. It was a fist fight between Randall and a boy of the Virginia Military Institute of the name of Andrew Porter. The fight had just begun when Ruth Dorsey and her sister, who had got wind of it, rode up on their ponies to see that the Yankee boy had fair play. The girls stood by and saw the fight go near its finish. Both boys had bloody noses, but Porter was getting the worst of it, although too strong-hearted to give up, when Ruth stepped between them and put an end to hostilities—a fortunate occurrence for the hazards of that game were considerable in the circumstances.

"She saved me a lot of work and maybe a beating, for I had undertaken to whip three of them one after the other," Randall Hope has written in his *Memories.* "It was quite an enterprise, but some of those boys had angered me by hinting that my people were cowards, so I had to show my courage. I was big of my age and quick as a panther, and my long ride had put me in good training. All my life I had been used to hard work in the open. They were not. I was doing well when the fight ended. My grandfather, an old time sailor and a veteran of the War of 1812, had been well trained in the use of his fists and the saber. He had taught me how to feint and block and put my weight into a blow, and from him I had got the priceless ability to take a hard jolt without discouragement or anger and to shoot a stiff one back if possible before my adversary had recovered his balance. I was strong and confident and eager to go on. Still I am glad it went no further. So were the others, I have heard.

"I have had much occasion to be grateful to Ruth Dorsey. She had a noble heart—God bless her!—and while she had not a face as beautiful as Nancy Thorn's, it was one to remember. Her black eyes flashed, her red cheeks had turned pale when she stepped between us and gave each of us a little shaking and pushed us apart. I can never think of the way she stood there and scolded those Virginia boys—never can I think of it without smiling and feeling an added devotion to my love of chivalry.

"It ground me then to be so treated, but I keep no grudges. I suppose the like thing would have happened in St. Lawrence County, where the feeling was just as bitter. All boys and girls have a kind of barbaric frankness until they begin to see the value of diplomacy."

The day after his arrival Randall had got permission from his aunt to help the mulatto boy, Thomas Jefferson, in his studies. For two evenings Randall had been allowed to sit in a corner of the kitchen and assist him with his problems. Some subtle quality of mind and spirit drew the boys into a liking for each other. The thin veil of color between them was not able to stop it. They had indeed much in common. It was in their blood and background and their love of good things. The boy from the remote North could see no impropriety in this. In the quarters Thomas was called "the lawyer" because of his good manners and his unusual command of words and his lack of dialect. One day Mrs. Hope notified Randall that the lessons would have to stop.

"Why?" Randall asked.

"Wilkins says that you are spoiling Thomas," she answered. "It doesn't take much to spoil a nigger."

"I don't know what you mean by spoiling him," said Randall.

"I suppose it is Wilkins' idea that you are making him feel above his place."

"Then I should think a spoiling would be good for him. I hate your Mr. Wilkins."

"My boy! What right have you to say that?"

"He is a cruel man. The mules, the horses and the niggers are all afraid of him. They hate him just as I do. He said that my mare kicked at him the other day and I found him beating her with a whip. I grabbed the whip out of his hands and told him that if he ever struck her again I would strike him. He doesn't like me."

"My dear child! Wilkins may be a little rough. He has to be. He means well. I forbid you to quarrel with him."

"I can not help it," Randall declared. "If I were Thomas Jefferson I'd want to kill him. He gives that boy only the most disagreeable work to do since I came here, and why? I can tell you. Thomas has white blood in his veins. He's got a white man's soul in his body. He wants to know something. He isn't contented with a dog's life. Wilkins doesn't like that. He calls it feeling high and mighty. He's trying to keep him down on the dog level."

Mrs. Hope lost her patience with this young rebel nephew. "I don't know what to do with you. I declare I don't," she said to him with kindling indignation. "You've got me guessing, boy. I want you to go to your room and sit down for an hour and try to think of the duty that you owe to your uncle and me."

That was the end of their talk and near the end of Randall's visit. He began at once to make plans for leaving. He was alone that evening. Soon after dark, he went out to the stable for a look at Tyke and Teaser. He found the boy Thomas braiding the mane of the mare as he had been wont to do after feeding time. He was crying as he worked. Wilkins had beaten him with a strap.

"Well, I'm going north," said Randall. "I can not stand it here. Within ten minutes I shall be on my way."

"Could you take me with you?" Thomas asked in a pleading tone.

"No, I'm sorry for you, Tom—God knows I'm sorry for you—but I couldn't take you. It wouldn't be right. If I were you I'd run away. I'd get to the North if I could, and I believe God would help you, but I couldn't steal you. That wouldn't do."

While Randall was saddling the mare Thomas disappeared and was running down the road as fast as his legs could carry him.

Fortunately the family had gone to a political meeting in the city and, as he was in disgrace, Randall had not been invited to go. In anticipation of a sudden move he had been storing cookies, cheese and bread and butter in his room. He packed his saddle-bags and threw them out of the window. Then he went to the stable, led the mare to the hitching straps and adjusted his saddle and bags. Teaser seemed to realize that they were about to begin another journey and scampered around the floor with little whines and growls of enthusiasm. Randall was mounted and about to start when Wilkins' gruff voice broke the silence. He was standing in the open doorway. It was not quite dark and his figure was but dimly etched upon the background of the night.

"Where ye goin'?" he asked.

"That's my business," Randall answered.

"It is, eh?" Wilkins growled.

"Yes, sir. Thank God I'm not one o' your niggers."

The boy passed the superintendent and set out in the road at a gallop with Teaser following. After he had traveled a mile or so he saw a flash of light in the middle of the road ahead of him. Then a flame flared up showing the figure of Thomas Jefferson holding a paper torch above him. The light went out when Randall came up to him and stopped.

"I'm running away," the negro boy said. "Please take me with you, master."

Randall hesitated. "Tom, I don't know what to say to you," he answered.

The negro boy pleaded. Suddenly they heard the baying of the bloodhounds.

"Do you hear that?" Thomas asked. "My young master, if you do not help me I may be killed."

"Well, jump on behind me," said the white boy. "I am not responsible for your going, anyhow, and I can not leave you to the bloodhounds."

The roar of the latter was coming near when a slap of the rein's end started the mare into a swift gallop. It was a dreadful sound that was now ringing through the hills. The darkness increased the terror of it as the hounds came on like an eager pack of wolves. Their roaring faded fast and soon the boys could but dimly distinguish it. They stopped for a moment and Teaser, who was now breathing hard, was helped to the lap of his master. They went on at a slower pace. Fortunately there were no large towns on that road, for a stretch of more than twenty miles.

Randall had avoided a village at the gate of the valley on his way down by taking a road, little traveled, to the west of it which wound through a rugged, wild country. He dreaded the canine envy and public curiosity which his dog created in large communities. It was near midnight when the mare headed for a trough fed by a spring at a fork in the road. Teaser was whining with thirst. Randall let him down and lifted him so that he could drink in the trough.

"We'll have to let up a little on the mare," Randall said to Thomas. "She's tired. We'll let her walk until she's cooled off and then we'll feed and rub her. We're away beyond the range of the bloodhounds. There is the fork that goes around the village ahead. I remember the spring and water trough. The darn magnetic telegraph might make us trouble in the village."

They walked beside the mare with Teaser on the blanket, behind the saddle, for an hour or so. Then they stopped and gave her a feed of oats out of the saddle-bag, a rubbing and a bait of grass. The boys and the dog devoured half their store of cookies, cheese and bread and butter. Tyke, refreshed by good care, and remembering the road and its beloved end in Hopkinton, went on at the dog-trot to which she had become accustomed on her long journey southward. Now she had the boys on her back but did not ask for quarter.

Near daylight they rode far back in the deep woods and camped for the day, and having fed and groomed the mare, made a bed for themselves and lay down to sleep. They had slept the day out, nearly, when Randall was awakened by the touch of Tyke's muzzle. She had slipped her halter again and was nudging for food. Randall arose and was petting her when he was startled by a loud voice.

"Hey there, me laddie buck! Sure I've caught up with ye at last. By the faith o' Saint Peter! Ye can be hard on a horse."

It was a trying moment for the Yankee boy. He turned quickly and saw a man about thirty-five years of age sitting on a moss covered rock not fifty feet away, with a rifle lying across his knees. He was in ragged clothing. His face was freckled, his hair long and carrot red.

Again the stranger spoke: "Now don't be feelin' fer the little pop-gun in yer belt or I'll be askin' the good God to forgive me for another sin. Sure I've enough on me soul now."

"Who are you?" Randall asked.

"Patrick O'Dowd an' God give me better company. Sure now what would ye be doin' with the nigger lad?"

"The nigger lad!" Randall exclaimed, not intending to admit that his companion was a negro.

"Aye—the nigger! Sure he's as white a blackbird as ever I put me eye on, but ye'll no be foolin' me with the like o' him, lad."

"This boy is my cousin," Randall said. "We are on our way north."

"An' ye've come to yer road's end," said the Irishman.

"What do you mean?" Randall asked.

"I'll be takin' ye back to Berry Wilkins, the way ye come."

Thomas had awakened and was lying with his face on his elbow shaking with sobs.

Randall's courage rose as he looked down at him. He turned upon the stranger and flung these words:

"Look here, mister. We'll go where we please. If we're took anywhere we'll be took on our backs and either you or I will be dead before then."

The stranger cocked his rifle.

"Well, be jabbers! Ye've a brave tongue," said the Irishman. "I hate to be killin' the likes o' ye."

"If you want a shooting match let's have it fair," said Randall. "You wouldn't want to shoot me as you'd shoot a deer. It would look better for each of us to back off twenty paces and ask this boy to count three and then fire."

The Irishman laughed uproariously as he said: "Bedad, there's a Yankee trick would make the moon laugh. What have I done to be riskin' me life in a dool? I can think o' a better thing. It's a haunch o' baked venison over at my cabin at the top o' the hill. When ye get the taste o' that in ye ye'll no be wantin' to fight with me. Wilkins an' his men'll be comin' up the hills. Ye can do yer fightin' with them an' good luck to ye."

The Irishman had said this in a friendly tone.

"Come on now, an' I'll drain yer soul o' bitterness an' fill yer belly an' show ye the heart o' old Ireland."

They followed the Irishman through the thickening dusk beneath the roof of the forest, traveling not in the marked way by which Randall had left the road. After they had walked for a quarter of an hour or so through thickets of rhododendron, their guide stopped and whistled. Randall and Thomas went to his side.

"Whisht!" said the Irishman, as he held up his hand and listened. Then he whispered:

"Do ye hear that now?"

They could hear plainly the distant baying of bloodhounds. They stood a moment in the darkness. The sound was coming nearer. It gave Randall the feeling of a wounded deer with the hounds on his track.

"It'll be Berry Wilkins an' his dogs," said the Irishman. "Will ye give up or fight?"

"We'll fight," said Randall, as he handed his knife to Thomas. "We'll go back dead if we have to, but not alive. That's what we think of slavery."

"Bedad! I like a fightin' man!" the other exclaimed. "I'll not be liftin' me hand ag'in' ye, mind that."

The baying of the hounds now filled the dark forest with weird echoes. They had probably reached the camping-place and were nosing around it.

"If we were on the road we could run away from them," said Randall.

"Sure it's half a mile to the road, an' the goin' rough as a dragon's tongue," said their guide. "Ye'd never find it, lad. Folly me, I tell ye. Kape close to me heels."

The Irishman led them down the side of the brushy hill, on which they had stood, to a deer trail where there was fairly good footing. Here their guide proceeded with great caution. In a moment he stopped.

"We'll stop here, I'm thinkin,' an' jump out o' the trail," he said to Randall.

The hounds were coming on the track of the men and the mare, and Randall found it not an easy thing to stand still. There was some obstacle in the trail ahead. Just what it was the boys were unable to make out.

Their guide took the bit of the mare, led her a step forward and commanded the boys to mount.

They did as he bade them. The Irishman lifted Teaser and put him in Randall's arms. Then he picked up handfuls of the damp forest mold and rubbed it on the hoofs of the mare and the feet of the dog and threw it into the trail ahead, after doing which he took a little running start and leaped over a fallen tree trunk and down the hillside ten feet or so.

"Now give her a jump over that log an come on wid ye—quick now," he called.

The dogs were not twenty rods behind them when Tyke leaped the log at the trailside, landing well beyond the Irishman. The latter led them up to the trail again at a point some fifty feet beyond where they had left it. They went on a few paces and stopped.

"Oh, ho! Wilkins, are ye there?" the Irishman shouted at the top of his voice, for the dogs were now so near it was not easy for one to make himself heard. There was only a pair of them but they filled the woods.

The bloodhounds had veered up the hillside and were now coming down to the deer trail. Randall thought it curious that their guide should have used such care in leaving the trail, only to return to it. The quick verdict of his mind was that the Irishman had lost self-control as his ears began to fill and run over with the roar of the dogs.

The baying stopped suddenly. They had heard a cracking of sticks and then a thump and a muffled yelping and scrambling of the dogs. Patrick O'Dowd shouted in a loud voice:

"Ho, ho! Ye sons o' hell an' I think ye've come to the end o' yer travels, I do—I do."

"What has happened to them?" Randall asked.

"Sure they've gone down in a deadfall," said the Irishman. "They'll go no further this night. They're in need o' rest anyhow. Come on, lads, I can smell the roast meat at the sign o' the skull bone."

They hurried along, the Irishman walking at the mare's head. Randall knew what a deadfall was. It might be a pit covered with brittle sticks and a thin layer of dirt and leaves, or a snare which released a crushing weight to fall upon the victim. These devices were used by the old-time hunters to capture big game. The dogs had undoubtedly fallen into a pit dug and covered for deer.

"I'm kind o' sorry for those dogs," said Randall as they went on.

"Don't be bleedin' yer heart for the likes o' thim," was the answer of Patrick O'Dowd. "Sure they'd take an arm off ye, quick, give 'em the chance, and grab for more."

In a few minutes he stopped the boys, saying:

"Ye'll be waitin' here till I give ye the word to come on, an' mind ye kape whisht."

The Irishman left them. They could hear the baying of the dogs in the pit, but now it seemed to be far away.

Soon their guide returned and said that he had found Wilkins and another man waiting in a wagon on the road.

"He axed me had I seen ye," said he.

" 'Sure,' says I, 'an' I sent them up the Sleepy Creek trail toward the north road. They'd be five mile ahead o' ye by now an' the dogs are on their track.'

"Wilkins put the lash on his horses an' away he wint. Sure he's off our hands for the night, an' good speed to him."

CHAPTER V

AT THE SIGN O' THE SKULL BONE

THE O'Dowds were of a proud old family in Ireland. A younger son of it had come to Virginia to seek his fortune early in the nineteenth century and invested in wild lands. His lands had been cut off by a main road running north and south, some ten miles to the east of them. He had not prospered. He had taken to soothing his regret with strong drink and had gone the way of many like him—married the degenerate daughter of a poor neighbor, worn his young manhood away, in backwoods poverty, with many mouths to feed, and died the worse for all his years of living.

His children—save Patrick, the youngest and brightest of the brood—had moved to the mountain country in western North Carolina. Patrick had been a guide in the forest and had learned to read and write and had married a good-hearted woman of some intelligence. They were childless. They had written to the family in Ireland and their letter had brought to them an interesting cousin—one Felix O'Dowd, a blind man—who received a small allowance from the estate of his father. This allowance paid regularly to Patrick for board, clothes and care had kept the mouse from shedding tears at the sight of his meal bag, as the latter was wont to say. The O'Dowd cabin on the rough forest road had a loom, rag rugs on its cleanly floor, a small porch, and flowers in its dooryard. The skull bone of a horse was fixed on a stake at the roadside.

Felix O'Dowd—then forty-two years of age—sat on the porch in a glow of candle-light that came out of the open door when the little party arrived. Many years of his life had been spent in a regiment of artillery and he had lost his sight by being careless with his powder on a spree. He could sing well, and after that, had been for years a wandering minstrel in the old country. With a baritone voice of unusual power and sweetness he could sing a day on the streets of any city and live a month on the proceeds. They were careless days until bad health had clouded his voice and spirit. Now after a year of rest in the cabin, at the edge of the wilderness, his great treasure had come back to him. Again he had the light heart and the clear rich voice of old.

His Celtic head and face were of noble mold, and proudly carried. His sightless eyes and the tufts above them were black as a raven's wing; his hair almost white. He was nearly six feet tall and there was marked distinction in his look and manners. This was the man that Randall saw when he and Patrick, walking side by side, with Thomas leading the mare behind them, came near the cabin.

"There's me cousin Felix," said Patrick. "He's blind as a bat but he has the voice of an angel. He'll be singin' yer soul to Paradise before he's an hour older."

"Me darlin'," said Patrick to his cousin, "here's doin's to rattle the tongue in yer head. A Yankee boy an' a brave lad he is, goin' north with a runaway slave. Ho, ho, I say, an' what do ye think o' that, now?"

"Whisht," avourneen!" said Felix in a gentle musical voice. "We should be lavin' judgment to God an' mind mercy, for we're all in need o' it."

Randall took a careful look at the blind man, who wore a velvet cap with a tassel at the top and was neatly although plainly dressed.

Those words and the voice in which they had been spoken had brought a thrill of joy to the hearts of the wanderers. Even Teaser approached the man who had spoken and stood before him with a wagging tail. Randall took the hand of Felix O'Dowd and thanked him. The blind Irishman arose and felt the breast and shoulders and face of the boy.

"Ah, here's a flower o' God!" he exclaimed. "Six foot to the roots o' his hair! Big bones, broad shoulders, blue eyes—I'm thinkin'—an' a light crest an' the sweet heart o' youth in him! He trembles like a reed in the wind an' there's the path o' a tear on his cheek!"

Randall thought it strange that the blind man had been able to give these details.

"Ah, me darlin'," said Patrick, "he was that mad at me his heart was like to burst because I let on that I'd be takin' him back to Berry Wilkins. It was a purty thing to see the mad o' him."

"Berry Wilkins!—the man with the heart o' stone!" said Felix O'Dowd. "I hate to let meself down by turnin' me tongue on him. One thought o' the man gives me a sore heart."

Randall says in his *Memories* that he had never seen a more godlike face and head than that of the blind man. "I was to know later that it was like Edwin Forrest's," he added.

Randall answered him: "Wilkins has been cruel to this boy and I'm trying to get him away. I am a nephew of Roderick Hope."

"Ho, ho! A nephew of Roderick Hope!" said Patrick.

"Yes. And I've been visiting my aunt and uncle and I know how this boy has been treated. I shall try to take him north with me."

"An' may nothin' cross yer path worse than the beam o' the harvest moon," said Felix.

Randall told of his life in the North and why he had come to visit his uncle. Patrick's wife—a kindly soul—came out and greeted the newcomers and said that supper was ready. The baked venison and boiled potatoes and hot biscuit with good butter and wild honey and tea are among the recorded memories of Randall Hope.

When it was over Patrick went to the log stable with the boys and stood by while they fed and watered and rubbed the mare. Then Thomas Jefferson was given a blanket and taken to his bed in a back corner of the hay-loft and warned not to show himself below until he heard the voice of a friend.

As Randall and Patrick were walking toward the cabin, under a starlit sky, they could hear Felix tuning his harp.

"Now by the powers!" said Patrick, "ye'll be hearin' what'll soothe the soul o' ye."

In half a moment the strong sweet voice of the singer came out of the open cabin door and filled the silence around them. They stood and listened as it flooded down the hillside and rang in the distant woodlands. Clearly they could hear the words it carried:

The harp that once thro' Tara's halls
The soul of music shed.

When the song was ended Patrick put his hand on Randall's shoulder and said:

"Do ye mind the soft o' it? Sure it's like throwin' duck's down in the air—the voice o' him. Come in now an' ye'll think the cabin is old Ireland—sure ye will."

The blind man stood with the harp hanging from his shoulder playing as he sang the songs of Erin, his face lighted with his passion. Now and then a tear would roll down his cheek. He finished a song and then he mopped his brow with his handkerchief and said:

"It's like mowin' the rye. Ye get a sweat on ye. Sure I think yer ears'll be yelpin' like a whipped dog before now."

"Go on, me darlin'," said Patrick. "Sure ye've got the voice o' God in yer mouth to-night. 'Twould put the lark to shame."

"Arrah! I think it's the sweet heart o' the blond lad that's helpin' me," said Felix. "Sure while I sang I could feel the tear in his eye."

"There's been many a tear in my eye since I sat in this chair," said Randall.

"God love ye, boy, and make your soul a light in the dark world!" Felix exclaimed. "Sure, Patrick, it's the rest an' the pure air an' the love o' ye an' stoppin' the drink that has lifted the soul in me. I know—I know that I never could put the heart an' voice in me singin' that I do now, thanks be to God!"

"I believe that you could make a lot of money out of your singing," said Randall, with his Yankee common sense.

"An' I think the good God has brought ye here to show me the way," said Felix. "The money will rain on us, but I need a fine honest lad like you to show me the way an' kape me feet from slippin' out o' it. Sure we can live like a pair o' lords an' have a stockin' full ivery night for to put away ag'in' the time o' bad luck, God kape it from us!"

"I'll be glad to go with you an' you can pay me what you please," said Randall. "I want to go west—to Illinois, where my uncle lives."

"Aye, me brave lad! We'll go the way o' the sun an' swell the heart o' the west with gratitude, an' a third o' the givin's shall be yours—a third, mind ye, an' not a penny less, an' may the good God have hold o' our hands!"

"I have never doubted that the Lord had hold of my hand that day," Randall Hope has written in his *Memories*. "Without that day I wonder how I could have found the work which was given me. It was, I believe, something greater than good luck that led us to camp close by the hunting trail of Patrick O'Dowd, and which gave him the wit to defeat the plan of Wilkins and the generosity to take us to his home. Of course the notorious character of my uncle's superintendent was working hard against him on Skull Bone Hill, as it was called in those days.

"While I sat with Felix and Patrick and Katie O'Dowd, the good wife of the latter, we made our plans. Before daylight in the morning Patrick was to set out with Thomas and the mare on a forest trail which would lead them through the Sleepy Creek Mountains into Pennsylvania. Then Patrick would return and the negro lad would go to Bridgewater, traveling as Randall Hope, of Hopkinton. There he was to deliver the mare to Nancy Thorn, with a letter from me. He was to take another letter to Joseph Israel Slats, and follow his advice on the tramp northward.

"We reckoned that, white as he was, he would have no trouble across the Pennsylvania border if he traveled by night the first fifty miles or so. In the morning I was to go to Patrick's nearest neighbor and get him to lower food and water to the captive dogs. Then, if the weather was fair, Felix and I were to begin our journey. At the first town on our way, I was to write to my uncle asking him to send a man to Skull Bone Hill to get his two dogs."

CHAPTER VI

TRAVELING WITH THE WITCH DWARFS

It was a bright morning in middle July when Randall Hope, his dog Teaser, and Felix O'Dowd, the latter with his harp on his shoulder, began their journey. After some hours of travel they sat down by a purling brook at the roadside to drink and rest.

"Me darlin', what is it ye see now?" said Felix, as the boy led him to a log upon which he could sit down.

"The green woods and a beautiful brook and a big valley far down the road. It's a pity you are blind," Randall answered.

"Aye

" 'But not the more cease I to wander where the muses haunt
Clear spring, or shady grove or sunny hill,' "

the blind man quoted as he sat down. "This beautiful world is a bad place to be blind in—sure it is."

"You must have a wonderful education," said the boy, who had been deeply impressed by the talk of Felix.

"Sure I hope it's no more than me strength can carry," the blind man answered. "I was three years in Dublin University. I had a nimble wit for the Greek an' Latin and the colleens. They meant me for a priest, but the soul in me was more drawn to red lips and cheeks an' slender waists and blue eyes, although I had no the heart to make an ill use o' them. Me father was that vexed with me wildness he'd no have me break the light in his door again.

"I had never a gift for great things. God made me a common fellow with more likin' for the buxom way o' talk me mother gave me than for all the grand palaver o' the books. From her I got an ear for the singin' o' fairies and I jigged through my early life, I was that happy to be livin'. Now it's a weary road I travel—an unbearable road—if a poor sinner dare say so—only for what it leads to, the heavenly city, an' for the help o' the witch dwarf."

"What is a witch dwarf?" Randall asked.

"Sure a witch dwarf is one o' the great crowd o' childer who's waitin' for the chance to be born," said Felix. "His mother an' father before they've seen each other at all, at all, are picked out for him. An' first the weeny cutes are sent into this world as witches for to find their mothers an' fathers an' to bring them together an' put love in them. It's the job o' the little darlin's to be coaxin' 'em and turnin' the moon on 'em and witchin' 'em together. Oh, they are the great connivers!

"They grow to be four years old and never a day older, though they'd be livin', plase God, longer than you an' me. An' they learn the arts o' the heavenly Jerusalem and put them into the minds o' us—poor humans.

"Sure the witch dwarfs are the first born in every house. They have fairy bells on them. Sure it's one o' them that has hold o' your hand an' mine. If ye listen hard, when they're coaxin' 'round, ye can hear a little kind o' a ting-a-lingin' that'll put ye in mind o' weddin' bells—sure ye can. Oh, they kape the candles o' love lighted in the dark world. An' some o' the darlin's never get born at all, at all—poor things, because o' their ill luck. I've heard me mother say that some o' them turn thieves in desperation an' steal any man and woman they can coax an' wheedle into love madness, an' many a sorry marriage they make—bad 'cess to them—an' God would ever be layin' His lash upon the little knaves to punish them."

"And you have a witch dwarf?" Randall asked.

"Aye, a little bell dwarf—pullin' me hither an' yon to snare the heart o' me, as if—poor tyke—he had still a hope o' gettin' himself born—an' I with no thought o' him till a great trouble quickened me soul. He went with me and gave me the sight o' his eyes in the dark world—a very great thing, because he can see deep and far—the darlin'—even into the souls o' men. Often I get a sore heart and then the little God's messenger will be layin' his magic hand upon me, for, mind this, he has to protect and kape ye as young as he can ag'in' the day o' yer marriage. An' have ye never heard o' a witch dwarf until this hour?"

"Never," answered Randall.

"Oh, many a tale o' them me mother told me—God rest her soul! 'Twas then I got a faith in them."

"Well, maybe it was a witch dwarf that led me to Nancy Thorn," said Randall.

He told of the way he met her and of how she was always coming into his dreams, day and night.

"Oh, sure, boy, ye're like one who has hold o' the string o' a kite an' the winds o' heaven leadin' ye," Felix answered. "Soon ye'll be hearin' the bells."

"I'm sure good luck is ahead," said Randall. "Come, let's move on and try to find it."

"Wait till I sweeten the strings and I'll sing a prayer to God. It'll be 'The Old Singer an' His Harp.' "

"My mother and I have often sung it together," Randall answered.

"God love ye, boy, and can ye sing too?"

"I can sing tenor a little, but only by ear."

"Sing along with me, till we get the sound o' it," Felix said.

The latter finished tuning the strings and then the two sang together, Randall's clear tenor enriching the baritone flood that came from the lips of Felix with delightful harmonies.

"Me darlin'!" the Irishman exclaimed. "Ye've a noble voice in ye and the ear to guide it. No wonder ye be seein' good luck ahead. Sure it's a strange thing ye'd be findin' me here in the lonesome hills the way ye have. How could ye 'a' done it, boy, without the help o' the witch dwarf? An' I'll not be tryin' to say what is in the hearts o' the likes o' them. It may be they'll have bigger things for us to do than singin' for pennies."

"Have you ever seen the witch dwarf?"

"Three times I've seen him in me dreams," Felix answered, and his noble voice was that of one inspired to tell of great things. "He was like a child o' four that lives in the fairy lands—like an undressed child all naked and delicately shaped with shining feet in his sandals, an' he has wings white as the down o' the king's swans. He has a face and eyes—blue eyes—that would put ye in mind o' Heaven, an' a voice like the treble strings on a harp. He has hair yellow as gold that falls curling on his neck—like it was spun in Paradise an' dyed with the light o' the stars. Oh, he is a beauty—the little darlin'! Mind this—me brave lad—we are in high company and must look to our manners. I'll no be tryin' to say what they'll lead us to before night falls. The day is full o' wonder when ye travel with witch dwarfs."

"We shall have a good time together," said Randall. "I have thought of a part for Teaser in our work. I'll teach him to pass the hat."

"Aye, we'll let the little brat do the teasin'."

Then Randall spent a few minutes teaching the small dog to stand up beside him and hold a hat in his mouth.

Soon Felix arose and said: "The lead is out o' me brogues."

They went on, and as they traveled, Felix taught his young friend the words and music of an old Irish melody, and Randall had the gift to compose a tenor part for it.

Near the bottom of the long wooded hill, he saw in the valley beyond a team of horses coming at a swift trot and two men sitting in a wagon behind them. Thereupon he and Felix hid in a thicket by the roadside, Randall holding the dog in his arms.

"I think it may be Wilkins and his friend," he said.

This suspicion was well founded, for, in a few minutes, he saw the superintendent and another man go by in a spring wagon with room behind them for the accommodation of their dogs. When the man-hunters had had time to turn over the hilltop, Randall and Felix resumed their journey.

"Now our troubles are behind us," said the former as they went on. "Wilkins is on his way back."

"I know ye've a sore heart, boy, but don't turn yer tongue on him. Sure we've better things to think on."

They came to a fertile valley where were thrifty farms and well kept houses and on its far side a hamlet with a large white church and spire. They had traveled a mile or so in the valley when they came to a big company of men, women and children in a pleasant grove by the roadside. The children were at play and tables were spread under the trees.

"Here is where our work begins," said Randall. "They are having a picnic in this grove."

Immediately Felix began to play a lively tune and the merry company were quickly trooping toward them. Teaser sat at his master's feet with the latter's hat in his mouth. In a moment the two minstrels began singing.

"Bring to me my harp again,
Let me sing a gentle strain;
Let me hear its chords once more
Ere I pass to the Heavenly shore."

As they sang the whole company gathered about them. The pathetic melody bound the tongues of the merry-makers so that a deep silence fell upon them. The song went to their hearts and when it ended there was a loud clapping of hands, and men and women came up to compliment the singers. Coins began to fall rapidly into the hat which Teaser held. Among those who came to speak a word of approval, was a well dressed gentleman, who said:

"Boys, that's the best singing I've heard in a dog's age. Have you anything more in your locker as good as that?"

"This man is a great singer," said Randall. "He has many songs that he can sing for you as he plays the harp."

"I am Colonel Carnithan," the man went on. "I am entertaining the Sunday-school of our church. If you will come to the platform and sing half an hour for us, I will give you ten dollars and a good dinner."

They went together to the platform erected for certain exercises of the Sunday-school, Randall carrying Teaser in his arms and setting him on a chair at his side while they sang again the song of the old harpist. For more than an hour the people kept the musician on his feet singing the delightful lyrics and ballads of his native land. Then he and Randall joined the picnickers in a feast of cold chicken pies and salads and cakes and biscuit and jam and lemonade and coffee. The travelers left the grove more than twelve dollars richer than when they had arrived there, and a man who was going home early gave them a lift on their way.

So went the first day in their curious adventure of singing their way to the West.

They spent the night in the town of Swimley, near the Maryland line, at an inn described by a native they met in the road as a "right bang-up chicken fixin' tavern."

Next morning they turned into the Cumberland road, a main thoroughfare to the west. "It was a beautiful morning and I could almost imagine that I saw the little witch dwarf skipping on ahead of us," Randall has written.

At every village they stopped to sing in the streets and so increased their store of small coins. On the veranda of a big summer hotel near Round Top, the ladies stood in tears around the blind singer and more than seven dollars fell into the hat.

They were on a lonely stretch of road, and the sun was low, when they saw the smoke of a fire and a big Conestoga wagon in the siding ahead. Near the wagon a man and his wife were cooking their supper.

"Hurry up, there," the man shouted as Randall and Felix drew near. "How long do ye expect us to wait? Supper's ready."

"So am I," Randall answered. "What's on the bill o' fare?"

"Beans, by gosh; an' boiled potatoes an' syrup an' hot biscuit an' tea—an' all as free as the air ye breathe," the stranger answered.

He was a spare man about forty, of medium height, with gray eyes and a thin sandy beard. His wife, a slim, neatly dressed woman, with a kindly face and sleeves rolled to her elbows, was taking a small kettle of potatoes off the fire.

"Did ye notice how I say *beans?*" the stranger went on, "I don't say it careless like some do. No, sir, I speak the word with reverence. The bean, sir, is one o' the gods o' my country."

"Where do you come from?" Randall asked.

"Where do you suppose?"

"From New England—somewhere."

"Correct. Step right up to the head o' the class, next to the bean pot, and set down."

He handed plates and knives and forks to the two travelers. They sat down and Teaser crowded in between them, with keen interest in what he saw and smelled.

"Say, I guess I know why you thought we was from New England," the stranger added.

"Why?" Randall asked.

"'Cause we look kind o' lean and tired. Everybody in New England is lean an' tired."

"How does that happen?" Randall asked.

"It happened long ago, an' we've never had time to recover," the stranger went on. "First the Injuns kept pickin' on us; then there was the rocks an' hills an' stumps an' stones. They fought and wrassled with us all the week, an' the minister took hold of us on Sunday. He made the fur fly. He called us everything he could lay his tongue to; at last he found a word in the scriptur' which seemed to fit us exact'. It was worms. We didn't dast to talk back, an' so we let it go. Gosh! I didn't dare go into the bay for a swim, I was that scared o' the fish."

"Man, ye've a cheerful tongue in spite o' yer sorrows," said Felix.

"Well, sir, there was one thing that got the upper hand, as ye might say, after a while. It even floored the bean and the minister. It was the love o' fun. It didn't save our bodies. We never took on flesh. We didn't have time for that. But fun saved our souls. I ain't surprised that it took a barrel o' rum for a church raisin'. It was their only chance to git some fun out o' the meet'n'-house an' they improved it.

"In New England one idee an' then another began to die off. It was a kind o' epidemic. The Blue Laws seemed to get the smallpox. It spread fast. The old notion that there was nothin' good outside o' New England passed away. Great men an' great cities were springin' up in the West. Artemus Ward went around givin' lessons in the art o' laughin', an' most every one learned how.

"When I heard about the rich, level lands o' Illinois without a stick or a stun in the way, I knew a time was comin' when my farm would be a joke. I sold it, an' here' we be, on our way west. Now that you have had yer suppers, maybe you can stan' it to be introduced. Are ye willin' to know us? If you need evidence of our education I will remark: *'Sic semper tyrannis."*

Randall turned toward him, amused by his curious manner of speech. Felix laughed loudly.

"Well, I guess yer souls are saved, so after all this aimin' I'll pull the trigger. My name is Ebenezer Hicks. The Yankees had a great likin' for Bible heroes. I suppose they thought they were doin' a good thing for Ebenezer when they put him to Hickin'. I once knew a feller by the name o' Methuselah Swett, an' he was a lazy cuss too, an' was born in a cold climate. Well, so far as I'm concerned, I deserve all I got, but my wife don't. I warn ye that she's worthy of a better name."

Mrs. Hicks, who was picking up the dishes, only smiled as she went on with her work, and said:

"His only fault is that he talks too much."

"There now, you know *her,*" Mr. Hicks went on. "She's one o' the most reliable truth tellers that ever lived. If you want to know the truth about yourself, just follow us, an' you'll learn it an' it'll be meant for your good. Now, if ye don't mind, who are you?"

Randall introduced himself and Mr. Felix O'Dowd, and told of their work and destination.

"Singin'! By thunder! I'm quite a bird myself," said Mr. Hicks. "For more'n twenty years I've been to singin' school every winter. Tune up. I want to hear ye."

"We should love to sing for you, but it will soon be dark and we must find a place to spend the night."

"There is no better place than right here," Mr. Hicks answered. "We have a big house, beautifully decorated, stars in the ceilin', evergreens in the livin'-room, and a singin' brook in the dooryard, and perfect ventilation. I'll make a bough bed for you in this grove, and give each of you a pillow and a blanket. We have plenty of food and my wife and I sleep in the wagon."

So it happened that Randall and Felix and the dog Teaser stayed by the roadside with their fellow travelers, and the boy and the blind musician sang with the harp as they all sat around the fire.

"That's good music, an' no mistake," said Hicks, when they had finished and put the harp away. "I could set here all night an' hear you fellers sing."

"Oh, man, I'm that spent with liftin' me brogues I could go to sleep with a tune in me mouth," said Felix. "We'll be singin' ye out o' bed in the mornin' for we must be afoot early before the lark has finished his matins."

A weird cry arose in the darkness from a point not far away.

"May the good God protect us! It's like the wail o' the banshee," said Felix.

"Oh, that's nothin' but a coon in a cornfield," Hicks answered. "That's his way o' tellin' his family that he's struck it rich an' they'd better come on. A coon knows a good thing when he sees it. You can trust his judgment to pick out the best there is on a farm and help himself to it. He don't make no mistakes.

"One year the coons et up half my corn an' then they tackled the poultry. They got a number o' chickens an' a turkey. I set some box traps an' one night I ketched a coon. My neighbor had ketched a skunk an' put him in a cage. He hadn't found him good company. The critter was like a man that talks too much. My neighbor had had enough. So we fixed up a scheme. I had an old barrel churn that was turned by a wind mill. I hadn't used it for a long time. We managed to drive the skunk into the barrel.

"I got that coon by the nape o' the neck and dropped him in with the other thief and clamped on the cover. There was quite a consid'able row goin' on in that churn when I was borin' a couple o' holes to give 'em air—a good deal o' snarlin' an' growlin' an' shiftin' around. I got it on the bearin's, fastened the crank, connected the piston rod an' set her whirlin'. Say there was some swearin' in that barrel. In a minute I stopped it and unclamped the cover and let 'em out. Talk about actions that speak louder than words! Gosh! As soon as they got their bearin's you ought to have seen 'em go an' each one left a blue streak behind him. No more coons was ever seen on my place after that. When the old coon got back to his people they moved. He didn't have to waste no words on 'em. Naturally he wanted coon company and the more he looked for it the further his people moved. I don't suppose his own wife would have anything to do with him. A coon has quite an intellect. Of course he ain't no Shakespeare, but he's smart an' he likes to keep himself clean. You churn him once and you don't have to do it ag'in—not if it's done proper. He's convinced."

The moon had risen—a big, full, yellow, harvest moon, and before they lay down for the night Randall and Felix went to a noisy brook near the camp and refreshed themselves with a bath while Hicks was cutting boughs for their bed. Soon the whole party was at rest and only the stir of the tethered horses, the song of the brook and the crackle of dying embers could be heard in the night silence. Randall refers in his *Memories* to the thoughts that came to him as he listened to these sounds in that first night of theirs under the trees in the open.

It occurred to him that Hicks spoke for the great caravans of people who were then going west on all the main roads, and he wondered if Nancy Thorn and her parents were that night resting somewhere on the long Cumberland highway; and when he fell asleep he dreamed that he heard the bell of the witch dwarf.

CHAPTER VII

THEY COME TO UNEXPECTED HAPPINESS AND EVIL OMENS

Teaser always managed to awake his master at the break of dawn, when he began sniffing and stirring about. He was wont to celebrate the end of the night with a display of animation—barking and growling and capering as if eager to be off on the road in which he seemed to find a most agreeable variety of sights and odors. By some instinct he knew the dogs whom he could safely bluff or play with. At the first sign of danger he ran to the feet of his master, where he never failed to find sympathy and adequate defense.

That morning the joy of Teaser awoke the camp. Randall was building a fire while Felix tuned his harp and began singing:

"Adown the shadowed valley side
The light of morning steals
And in the sky I see the glow
Of Phœbus' golden wheels."

In a moment Mr. and Mrs. Hicks jumped out of the wagon and stood listening until the song was finished. Then Mr. Hicks said:

"Say, boys, you've touched our feelin's. We're goin' down to git cleaned up a little an' when we come back we'll set yer gizzards singin' with ham an' eggs an' fried potaters an' coffee."

While they were getting breakfast the west bound stage drawn by four horses and loaded with people passed them, raising a cloud of dust. The side of the stage bore the legend in ornate letters:

THROUGH STAGE OF THE OLD SHAKEGUT LINE

There were many wagons on the road; some bound for the oil fields of Pennsylvania.

Hicks had in his wagon a map of his own making, and after breakfast they all studied it for a time. Randall and Felix decided to head for the nearest port on the Ohio River and take a steamer for Cincinnati. They spent that day on the road with Hicks and his wife, riding, save when it was necessary for all to alight and walk up the hills. At the village of Washington they left their new friends, who were there turning northward.

"I have a brother in Cincinnati," said Hicks as they were parting. "Here is his address, an' I wish you would go an' tell him that you met us, and that our goose is hangin' high."

Randall took the address and promised to find Mr. Hicks' brother. He and Felix set out on the road to Wheeling. That day they got an engagement to sing at a church party. Randall made the bargain with a thrifty spinster in the village of Clay's Valley, at eight dollars and a night's keep. They made a hit at the party and the lady took good care of them, but insisted on locking the door of their room on the outside at night.

She gave them her blessing and a letter to friends in a village down the road when they took their departure. They prospered in that leg of their journey, and when, near the end of the first week of September, they reached the rail city on the Ohio River, they had one hundred and twenty dollars in their pockets.

A great Democratic rally was in progress there. A noisy crowd filled the streets through which a procession was passing. Banners invoked the people to save the Union and the Constitution. Shouts of bitter passion rose out of the crowd. At last they had come in sight of that threatening political fire, the flames of which were soon to fill the land with consternation. There were drunken men quarreling in the edges of the crowd.

Many citizens were on police duty, doing their best to maintain order. It was no place for the kind of sentiment which the singers dealt in, so they left the harp and dog and pack in their room, took a bite of luncheon with them, and set out early for the park, where at two o'clock the speaking was to begin.

They found seats near the speakers' stand, and saw the park fill with people. The speakers were Congressman Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio, Senator Robert Toombs of Georgia, and Governor Henry A. Wise of Virginia. For the first time the two travelers began to feel the gravity of the issues then before the country. The auction block of the slave trader was loudly defended and, in the event of the success of the Republican ticket, secession and bloodshed were foretold by the congressman and the learned senator. Shouts of approval and dissent arose.

The man from Ohio raised a storm of passion with his bitter and violent denunciation of northern leaders. Governor Wise put the crowd in good humor with excellent wit and a more temperate view of the situation. When he had ceased speaking a quartette sang, and while it was singing a man went through the aisle on which Randall and Felix sat, distributing hand-bills. He had a repulsive face.

Randall looked at the hand-bill which he had received from the man who had passed. It was a hideous caricature of the Republican candidate, and beneath it was a handsome portrait of Mr. Breckinridge, and the argument was compressed into the query: "Which?"

"What has disturbed ye, boy?" Felix asked as they were leaving the park before the meeting ended.

"A man with a hateful look in his face," Randall answered.

"Aye, and his spirit had a rough hand. I could feel the touch o' it, boy. When I'm near the likes o' him

I can see a serpent's eye in the air before me. It is a shining little pool o' darkness, deep with evil, that I can see, with all me blindness."

"I think you will soon make me believe in the witch dwarf, for the man you speak of is the only one I ever saw with a snake's eye in his head. I guess it's what my grandfather means when he speaks of the evil eye."

"Oh, God keep us, boy! It's a hard world we live in—a dirty world, ye'll be thinkin' after a day like this. Me lad, ye're like a white dog in a coal bin."

When they had got to their room, Randall told of the ghost ride and of meeting the highwayman in the dim light of the early morning, and of his night in the lonely, abandoned, lumber camp, far back in the deep woods, and of the strange men whose voices he had heard in the darkness.

"Well, lad, it's not for the likes o' me to be sayin' what it means," Felix remarked. "This land is in danger. There's a deal o' shoutin' in the house. Good an' evil can not live together, an' when the fight comes there'll be a lettin' o' blood the like o' Waterloo, I'm thinkin'. The deviltry o' this day has sickened me. When do we move?"

"There's a steamer to-morrow," Randall answered.

"The little witch dwarf has a great pride in him," said Felix. "He no likes the look o' us—the spendthrift! He'd have us arrayed in purple an' fine linen, like the well-born gentlemen we are."

"He is right, for I think that with better garments we shall have better luck," said Randall. "The first we know we'll be singing for dollars in halls and churches and not for pennies in the streets."

So they went a-shopping and bought new clothes and boots and hats and an outfit of linen and neck wear and two carpetbags. At the day's end, shining from foot to crown, they sang in the dining-room of their tavern while the guests were at supper, and their landlord paid them with a receipted bill for their keep.

"I can sing better with a gentleman in me brogues," said Felix after they had answered the last encore and had sat down to eat. "Did ye mind the pride o' me?"

"I did," said Randall. "The only thing like it in the room was the pride o' me."

Next day they set out by steamer for Cincinnati. The captain was a genial man who invited them to sing in his room after supper, and offered them leave to give a cabin concert next evening, one-half the proceeds of which were to go to the disabled sailors of the fleet. It was a success, the singers making many friends, and enough money to pay for their passage.

The voice of Felix rang out like a sweet-toned bell. He sang a number of the old Irish love ballads and Randall has written that the divine power of the little witch dwarf was in his tongue and face. It was the memorable evening when Mrs. Phyllis O'Connor, a handsome widow of forty on her way from Pittsburgh to her home in Cincinnati, lost her heart to Felix O'Dowd. She courted him incessantly through the delightful days that followed in their river journey. As they sat together on the deck she read aloud to him from one of the novels of Charles Lever, and when night fell they chatted cheerfully in a retired corner of the deck until bedtime, when the fair lady would conduct him to his stateroom door. One night, after a long evening with Mrs. O'Connor, he said to Randall:

"Sure, I feel like a young lad who's been lookin' into the eyes o' a colleen—she's that sweet to me. Would ye be thinkin', boy, that she'd put up with a poor wreck o' a man like me?"

"Why not? You're a handsome man, and your singing has gone to her heart," Randall answered. "It's the talk of the boat that she's dead in love with you, and I don't blame her. I'm fond of you myself."

"Oh, God love ye, lad! Yer words are like the song o' the lark to me. Tell me what is yer thought o' her?"

"I think that she's a good woman. There are those on the boat who know her. They speak well of her, and they say if you marry Mrs. O'Connor you'll be able to hang up your harp if you wish to, whatever that may mean."

"I think it's the work o' the witch dwarf—the little spalpeen!" said Felix. "He likes the look o' the lady—the blonde hair an' the blue eyes an' the shape o' her.

Never since me dear mother held me in her arms have I known a hand and voice the like o' hers for gentleness. Oh, sure now, she'd not be carin' for the likes o' me!"

"If it is not love that's in her eyes and voice when she talks to you, I don't know what it would be," Randall answered.

"The colleens! The colleens! How they have put me about!" the man exclaimed. "Well, anyhow, God forgive the pride in me an' help me to forget meself," Felix added as he knelt for his prayers.

The next day about the middle of the morning, the charming widow came to Randall, who was walking on the upper deck.

"Mr. O'Dowd sent me to bring you to him," she said with a smile.

When they came to where Felix sat, he arose and put his hand on Randall's shoulder and said:

"I'm after tellin' ye, lad, it's a wonderful thing to be travelin' with a witch dwarf. Sure he's led me to the fair lady o' me dreams. Long ago I met her in Dublin, an' I was that sick with the love o' her it turned me from me books an' the high honor o' the priesthood. An' our little witch, the wheedler! never gave me a hint o' her until I was sittin' here a-tellin' o' the slender, red-cheeked, lovely colleen—in face an' form like unto Dian of the golden distaff—that filled me heart in the sweet days o' me boyhood. Then the very God-blessed one whispers in me ear that she has said a thousand prayers for me in the gone years as I have done for her, an' never have I heard such music, boy, as when her lips touched me ear, an' I'll not be tellin' ye what I said to her, for no man may speak like that more than once in a lifetime. But this I'd have ye know, boy, it brought a little quiver out o' her an' a squeeze o' me hand an' the golden word that is the great giver o' happiness."

"From now our lives shall flow on together," said the fair lady, then a little too plump to be compared with Dian of the golden distaff, as Randall has written, but still good to look upon, and of winning manners. She kissed the boy, and added, "There shall be happy words at the door and feasting at our table when you come. If you will let us, we should like to think of you as a beloved son."

They landed that day. The lady's carriage was at the wharf, and Felix and Randall went with her to her home. It was a large and handsome house with ample grounds and gardens and many servants. In his *Memories* Randall Hope of Hopkinton has much to say of that house and of the "elegance and good taste" of its furnishings and hospitality and of the gracious lady who made them welcome and of the merry talk and high spirits of O'Dowd.

The author has no heart to tarry there because the little romance of O'Dowd is but a step in the history of Randall Hope. That evening he and Felix went with their hostess and her aunt who lived with her to the new opera-house where John Wilkes Booth was to play Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar.* Randall had never seen a large theater or a well-acted play, and his interest in the latter was heightened by the fact that his memory had a part in it of which no one, save he and O'Dowd, had any knowledge.

Booth, then at the beginning of his career, was an able actor, and when he entered with the procession in his white, purple-bordered toga, the noble dignity of his bearing distinguished him from the six other Romans among whom he walked and the audience greeted him with loud applause. When he turned to Cæsar and said:

"A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March," the music of his voice created a curious excitement in the boy Randall, and for a reason not yet clear to him. That music grew familiar as it proceeded in the dialogue with Cassius, and Randall's interest rose to astonishment when it said:

> Brutus had rather be a villager
> Than to repute himself a son of Rome
> Under these conditions as this time
> Is like to lay upon us.

Randall knew, then, why the music of that voice had been so engaging and familiar to him, for it had been no other than the voice which he had heard in the darkness and silence of the deep woods that night in June. The great player must have been among those scouts who were finding the way for a band of raiders. When they discussed the whole strange episode by Mrs. O'Connor's fireside after the play, Felix said:

"Sure I think the man is looking for another Cæsar."

The keen intellect of the boy caught and held that memorable note in the words of the blind musician—so soon it had come after the daggers of Casca, Brutus and Cassius had wounded him as they drew the blood of their master.

"Let's have a song of old Ireland before we go to bed," said Mrs. O'Connor, bringing the harp to Felix.

"'And then a herald brought a shapely harp and gave it to the hands of Phemius, knower of all pleasant themes,'" Felix quoted, as he touched the strings and sang, turning their thoughts from tragedy to love.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ADVENTURES OF THE SLIM STRANGER

Randall had passed his nineteenth birthday on that westward journey. He was six feet tall. "I was a big-boned lad," he writes, "and most men I met had something to say about the breadth of my shoulders and the depth of my chest or the size of my arm or the straightness of my body. The full amount of my debt to Providence I did not know until I had got to Cincinnati and beyond it."

In that thriving city of one hundred and sixty-two thousand people on the Ohio, the young man found his strength and courage. He had gone to a "variety show" with young Michael O'Connor—a nephew of his hostess. A feature of the show was a powerful German of the name of Fritz Roemer who invited any sturdy men in the audience to come to the stage and try their strength against his in the old game of pulling sticks, in which Randall had had much practise. There were many competitors who were easily defeated by the German, three of them being roughly thrown over his head. At last Randall climbed to the stage with the stalwart Michael O'Connor. The latter hung a moment and then fell in the lap of the strong man. Randall knew the trick of the game, but had little hope of winning when he sat down facing his powerful adversary with the stick between them.

"The German was weary and a little careless," Randall writes. "He underrated me. I got the jump on him and had him off the floor before he had tightened up. He hung a second, and gave a mighty tug, but my legs were nearly straight then, and it would have taken a horse to move me. He had to come my way. He took it in good part, and invited me to his dressing-room. There my friendship for this big-hearted Teuton began. He was going to Dayton next day, and asked me to go with him and help him with the crowd of contestants who were always coming up to try his strength and making him work a little harder than he cared to. This I declined to do."

The audience had cheered Randall to the echo, and a reporter had gone behind the scenes to interview him.

"I am not seeking fame, but only fun," he answered, as he left the theater with his friends.

When he was dressed the German went out with Randall and O'Connor for a look at the night life of this greatest city of the Middle West—noted as the hog slaughtering center of the world, and the chief station of the underground railway. They went "over the Rhine" and there came upon a band of drunken rowdies who had captured a pair of runaway slaves.

O'Connor said the captors were river-men. They were bringing the slaves back to town roped together in a hollow square. The roystering river-men were spitting on the negroes and treating them roughly.

"These nigger hunters get a big reward from the Golden Circle for every nigger they send back," said O'Connor.

"What is the Golden Circle?" Randall asked.

"A band of rich southern planters. Their agent here is a man by the name of Lewis Powell."

In a moment Randall's blood was up.

"Let's put a stop to this," he said to his friends.

The sidewalks were crowded with Germans who had been listening to an outdoor address in behalf of the Republican candidate, by Mr. Carl Schurz, one of their own countrymen. Many of them were carrying torches. They were in a favorable mood when Roemer shouted an appeal to them, in their own language. In a moment the ruffians were halted and surrounded by a crowd of men. Then, led by Randall, Fritz and O'Connor, some of the bolder spirits fell upon the offenders, and in a moment had them lying in the dust. Quickly Randall cut the rope from the captives and set them free. They ran up the street as the crowd opened.

The river-men, who had been dazed by the swiftness of the attack, arose with loud curses, fighting mad. In the slang of the river, one of them "crooked his neck and neighed like a stallion." He dared any man present to stand up on his "kickers" and face him for a fight. Suddenly he spat in the face of Randall who stood near him. The boy answered the insult with a swift blow of his fist which went straight to the chin of the rowdy. The latter fell like a stricken ox. It was a moment full of danger, for the nigger hunters were mostly desperate men. Two of them drew their side knives, but were quickly seized and disarmed. The man who had fallen arose yelling for satisfaction:

"Come on. You'll find me a hog for punishment."

It was the second time that Randall found the training he had got from his grandfather in the art of self-defense of some value to him. The ruffian had little skill with his fists. He leaped at his adversary, seeking to get a "bite hold"—as they called it, for those days men fought like bulldogs on the river. Often ears and noses were bitten off, or an eye gouged out with the thumb in their encounters.

Randall found himself in the middle of a torch-lit arena, walled in mostly by strangers, facing this wolf in human form. As the latter rushed, Randall dodged and retreated, driving his right fist and then his left into the evil face before him, with a mighty jolt in his blows. Often the bully fell and rose again, leaping at his enemy like a beast of prey, with savage strokes of the paw, but the boy eluded him, and the wild rushes ended on the firm wall of the sturdy Germans who stood around them. Then a swift and well directed blow would send the river-man reeling to the dust.

He arose for the last time slowly and with great difficulty, for he was nearly exhausted by his efforts. He staggered forward and fell again. Then he struggled to a sitting posture, his right arm bracing him. When he had got his breath he said in a mournful tone:

"Boys, by God, that is the severest colt I ever tried to break. He's broke me. Abner Pert will never fight no more. He's a-goin' to be good, by God, he is, from this time for'ard. When a man has spit out two teeth an' gone blind, an' has the heaves, it's erbout time he was excused—I *reckon*. My name is Abner Pert, an' I work for the Great Western Steamboat Company, an' if that young feller wants anybody to clean his spittoon er black his shoes, he can have me."

This reaction in the mind of Abner Pert brought a laugh from the crowd. Randall Hope confesses a sense of shame at having had a part in such a battle, but says that it seasoned him and Abner for what was coming. It is indeed a vital point in our history. He helped the river-man to his feet, and he and his two friends took him to a physician for repairs. There Randall discovered that his own fists needed a little mending.

"Say, young feller, you be sartain a severe colt," said Abner, when they were putting him into a coach to send him home. "If you've any use fer a dog, send fer me."

The conversion of Abner Pert had begun. He was now on his way.

In the musty files of the leading Cincinnati newspaper of that time is an amusing and rather vivid article founded on these two adventures. It is entitled "How a Slim Stranger Raised Hell in the Hog City—What's the Matter with the Police over the Rhine?"

Next morning Randall went to see the brother of Ebenezer Hicks. A letter from the latter to the young man was awaiting him. It said:

Dear Sir: Your friends from Pennsylvania overtook me yesterday. I knew 'em as soon as I see the gal on the blaze-faced mare. You said she would be the handsomest gal in the world mounted on the purtiest young mare that ever wore a saddle. That's how I happened to know her. We was gettin' dinner ready by the side of the road, an' I hollered to 'em. "What is it?" the man says, as they pulled up. "Well, sir," says I, "dinner's ready fer one thing, and fer another thing, I'm a-lookin' fer the handsomest gal in the world ridin' on the purtiest young mare that ever wore a saddle, an' I guess I've found 'em—leastways, if I haven't, I'm a poor judge, but I'll know in a minute. Is your name Thorn, and do you come from Bridgewater, Pennsylvaney?" "I'm the man," says he, lookin' surprised. "Well," says I, "I guess you know the handsomest boy in the world, whose name is Randall Hope of Hopkinton. He traveled with me a ways, and, if you come along, he wanted me to tell ye where he was. But I ain't goin' to talk a word more till we've had some dinner." Well, sir, we all set down and et and had so much fun together they decided to go along with us, and here we be in Zanesville, and will be in Springfield, Ohio, on the 16th of July, if all goes well. So if you make haste, I calculate you can meet us there.

Yours Truly,
EBENEZER HICKS.

While Randall was talking with Mr. Hicks young Michael O'Connor came with a warning. The man Lewis Powell—nigger hunter—was looking for him. Powell had called at Mrs. O'Connor's house, having learned in some way that the boy was stopping there. To avoid arrest it would be necessary for Randall to leave town.

Michael had come in a carriage. He had packed his friend's bag and brought it with him. They set out for a village north of the city where Randall could get the stage to Dayton. Mrs. O'Connor and Felix would be there to bid him good-by. While they were driving out of town Michael described Lewis Powell—a tall dark-skinned man with black eyes and a scar on his right temple. Again Randall had crossed the path of the highwayman. He looked at the note in his pocket addressed to "Lew."

CHAPTER IX

THE LOVE OF A BOY FOR A MAIDEN

RANDALL was glad to be going on, but the thought of leaving Felix gave him a heavy heart. The latter covered his sorrow with cheerful words that kept the party laughing until the coach appeared. Then he took the boy's hand, saying: "Son of Anak! Yer father is dead. When ye'll be feelin' the need o' one, turn to me, lad, an' I shall have the pride o' Telamon to be givin' ye all I can o' what the good God has give to me."

Fritz and the dog Teaser were on the stage with him. The young men had a long visit on their northward journey, and spent the night together at Dayton. Randall had begun to feel the urge of the witch dwarf, and at six o'clock next morning was on his way.

The romance of his friend and Mrs. O'Connor had given the fairy faith of Felix O'Dowd a rather firm footing in the boy's mind. His young imagination was showing him, now and then, the vision of a winged, beautiful child with nimble feet flashing in the sunlight. The stage broke down near the village of Eton and was hauled into a smithy for repairs, about sunset on the second day of his travel. He stood looking up the north road after he had eaten his supper and got a glimpse of the little witch beckoning to him on the sunlit top of a knoll far ahead. Then he could not be content to wait until morning when the repairs would be finished.

He parted with Fritz, whose address he had taken, and set out afoot and alone with his carpetbag lashed to his back, and Teaser at his heels. It was the evening of the sixteenth, and he was due in Springfield. He hurried along at a dog-trot until darkness fell, then, after an hour or so of rapid walking, he sat down to rest. He had been in arrears for sleep since reaching the home of Mrs. O'Connor. He had sat down, leaning against a shock of corn hard by the roadside.

The evening was warm, and a full moon shone down upon him. In a moment weary nature had succumbed. The boy, with the dog lying at his side, was asleep. He did not awake when, a few minutes later, Teaser ran up the road barking joyously. The dog had heard the familiar step of his friend Tyke. Then he had got the scent of her and had recognized it. He had been trained to hold his tongue at night, but now his joy overcame his prudence.

The Thorns, traveling with Mr. and Mrs. Ebenezer Hicks, had reached Springfield about noon that day and put up at an inn. They were expecting Randall on the stage from Dayton, and Hicks, sent by Nancy, had come down the road on Mr. Thorn's saddle-horse, leading Tyke to surprise Randall and bring him into town in his own saddle. Hicks knew the dog. The mare stopped and sniffed and began twitching for a free head. Hicks released her, and she followed the dog to her master and awoke him by nosing his face as she had done so often in the years of their friendship. He recognized her and arose and embraced her neck, while the dog was barking and scampering around them.

"It must be I'm dreaming, Tyke," said Randall. "It must be I'm dreaming, but I'm glad to see you, darling, I'm glad to see you."

"You ain't a-dreamin', boy—not by a jugful!" said a near and familiar voice. "I am Ebenezer Hicks, six foot tall an' full o' beans, an' sore as a hit thumb, not bein' used to the saddle. My legs are yellin' fer mercy. Nancy Thorn sent me down the road with your mare to bring you in. We learnt from the magnetic telegraft operator that the stage was busted an' had put in at Eton fer repairs. Then Mr. Thorn tried to send a message to you, an' was told that you had come on afoot.

"'Looks to me as if he was purty consid'able anxious to git here,' says I.

"'Well, do you blame him?' says Nancy with her cheeks as red as a ripe strawberry.

"'No, I don't,' says I. 'If I was him I'd be tryin' to invent a flyin' machine.'

" 'We've got one right here, and if you don't take it to him, I will,' says she.

" 'Do you mean his mare?' says I.

" 'I do,' says she, 'I want you to mount father's horse and lead Tyke down the road and meet him and bring him here just as quick as you can, because I must take a long look at him before I go to bed.' "

"All right! Let's hurry along," said Randall, as he jumped into the saddle.

In a moment they were loping, side by side, on the road to Springfield. Tyke, as usual, felt the haste of her master, and set a swifter pace than Hicks had ever ridden. The latter was worn out when they drew rein and slowed their pace to a walk near the edge of the town.

"Say, young feller, I feel like a chicken that has been chased by a dog till he's lost his tail feathers," said Mr. Hicks. "This young love business is too rapid fer me. If there's any more of it, I'll have to be excused."

They went on and at the water trough where two oil lamps were burning, Randall dismounted and opened his carpetbag and carefully washed his face and hands and dried them with a towel, and brushed his hair and put on a clean collar and necktie.

"If I'm going to be looked at I ought to be clean," he said.

"Take yer time," Hicks answered. He had dismounted and was sitting by the roadside. "I ain't in no hurry. I am like an old spring wagon that's busted an' lyin' in the ditch. What ye got them plasters on yer hands fer?"

"Had an argument with a river-man down in Cincinnati. I'll have to wear gloves for a day or two."

Hicks walked while Randall rode beside him to the inn. A big bonfire was burning in its dooryard. Mrs. Hicks and the Thorn family were sitting on its veranda. They came down to the driveway to greet the newcomers. A groom took the horses.

Nancy, browned by the sunlight on her long journey, "stood as straight as an arrow, dressed in a black riding costume with a band of velvet on her neck," Randall has written. "When she looked into my face she smiled and gripped my hand without saying a word. Then I knew that I had got hold of something. It was no flabby, cold-blooded, passive hand. When it touched mine her soul spoke to me.

"A beautiful young child playing with her mates in the dooryard ran toward us with a girdle of tiny, silver bells around her waist. In a moment the child had kissed me and said that she loved me. She was Nancy's young sister, Betsy Thorn, four years old."

"How curious!" Nancy exclaimed. "She is an odd little witch, given to sudden likes and dislikes. She often falls in love at first sight."

"She reminds me of a little witch I know of," said Randall.

It was the child's bedtime. She insisted that her father should go up-stairs with her and her mother to tell the bedtime story. Mr. and Mrs. Hicks went to their room, leaving Nancy and Randall alone together.

The boy told of his many adventures on the road, and of Felix O'Dowd and his witch dwarf and his romance.

"I want to hear more about the witch dwarf," said Nancy. "Did you say that he brought together the boys and girls whom God has chosen for each other, to put love in them and make them marry if he can?"

"Yes, that is his business. He uses all his arts to coax them on. It was strange, wasn't it, that he should have led my friend into the arms of his old sweetheart?"

He was using his arts at that moment, for Randall had drawn his chair close to Nancy's, and was looking into her big brown eyes, filled with a pretty wistfulness as the firelight shone upon them.

"I thought as I was coming up the road that I saw the cutest little winged child standing in the sunlight far ahead of me, and beckoning," Randall continued. "That is why I couldn't stay in Eton. But I guess that my imagination is running away with me."

"Do you really believe in this witch dwarf?"

He thought a moment, feeling for an honest answer.

"A month ago I would have laughed at such a fancy," said the boy, "but after traveling with O'Dowd and seeing and hearing what I have, how can I help believing in the witch dwarf? I love to believe in him when he leads me in the way I want to go."

"He must be a smart little wretch to know how to manage a big boy like you," the girl said with a look in her face which made him want to embrace her. "He's leading you to some one. There are many girls in the world, and I suppose he'll be showing you one, sweeter and nobler and more beautiful than any you ever saw."

She laughed merrily and then leaned forward, her chin upon her hand, looking into his eyes.

"He has shown her to me," the boy said.

"Is she good-looking?"

"It seems as if all the beauty in the world was hers."

At this point in their dialogue, Mrs. Thorn, who had, perhaps, caught the note of tender enthusiasm in his voice, from inside the door, came out and reminded Nancy that it was bedtime.

"I hate beds!" Nancy exclaimed. "Always when the day has begun to be interesting one gets shoved off to bed. Often I wish that all the beds were heaped in a pile and burned up. My father thinks that slavery is a terrible thing but I think that sleep is worse."

"My dear, is the day so very interesting that you can not get enough of it between six in the morning and ten at night?" Mrs. Thorn asked.

"I'd just have a few beds kept for sick people and nice old folks," said Nancy, as she kissed her mother.

All went to bed, but not until far in the night did sleep come to the young people. It may have been the witchery felt only and often by young lovers that kept them awake. When they came down-stairs both complained that the moon had shone in their faces.

"O'Dowd used to say that many threads in the snare o' the witch dwarf are made o' moonlight," said Randall when he and Nancy stood together on the veranda. "He likes to be turnin' the moon on ye. Two or three times in the night he was teasing me with his bells."

"And me, too," Nancy answered.

They did not know that the bells they heard were those which little Betsy Thorn had taken to bed with her, and that she had rung them in her dreams. For those two the sound would have lost none of its romantic flavor had they known the truth. Young lovers are not apt to question the things they like to believe.

Mr. and Mrs. Thorn, being wearied by their travels, decided to spend another day at the tavern in Springfield. Mr. Thorn and the young people had a ride together that morning. Nancy told Randall of the boy Tom's arrival in Bridgewater one midnight on the back of the mare. Mr. Slats had kept him for a day and then had taken him north.

When the party had returned Nancy and Randall coming into the dooryard felt the teasing of the little witch again. Betsy was running up and down in the flower garden with her girdle on her waist. She stopped and sat down by the bed of pinks and began to talk to some fairy friend who sat beside her and all unconscious of the boy and girl who stood near, watching.

"I kissed him when he came," Betsy was saying. "I am glad that he is your father."

It began to look as if the witch were in league with Betsy. Randall looked into Nancy's face. She was smiling. Her thick brown hair fell in graceful curls upon her shoulders. The golden strands in it seemed to glow in the sunlight. Her big dark eyes saw deep into his. That moment the look of her was like the call of a trumpet to the waiting soldier whose blood is hot for battle.

"I think that we had better go away from her," he said as they walked toward the inn veranda. "Our Little Friend is having a busy morning."

"It isn't fair to be eavesdropping in that way," Nancy declared with a laugh.

Mrs. Thorn stood on the veranda looking down at them. She was a smiling, kindly, dark-eyed woman about forty years of age, with a firm chin and hair prematurely gray. The three sat together. She was a woman of insight. She knew what was going on.

"Mr. Hope, what has happened to your hands?" the lady asked.

Randall looked down at the narrow strips of plaster which covered sundry abrasions.

"They were slightly injured in Cincinnati," he answered. "I and some others rescued a pair of negro slaves who were being roughly treated by a gang of river-men, and before the end of it I had to fight—or I would have had plasters all over me. I am ashamed of it, but I had to fight."

"Do you think it is right to help slaves to get away from their owners?" Mrs. Thorn asked.

"I do," Randall answered. "I helped a negro boy to escape when I left Virginia because I knew that he had been badly treated. I hate slavery."

"I was a southern girl, and brought up in the midst of it," Mrs. Thorn answered. "I never saw a negro ill treated. I think slavery is the best thing for them. No matter what you may think, it isn't right—it is not even honest, to deprive people of their property without paying for it."

Mr. Thorn had come out of the front door as these words, which carried a note of bitterness, were being spoken. He was a tall handsome man with a brown mustache. A twinkle of amusement was in his blue eyes. He had been worn out by the cares and exactions of a large business and was traveling overland in hope that exercise and fresh air would restore him. His thumbs were caught in the arm holes of his waistcoat and as he spoke he gestured with his fingers. That was a characteristic pose of Elijah Thorn.

"Young man, you see before you a family divided by its opinions," he said. "Nancy and I are northerners in spirit. Mrs. Thorn is a confirmed, violent and hopeless southerner. There are many families in the same fix. I don't know what will come of it—we are all so mixed up—but I hope that we are of one mind on the subject of a picnic luncheon."

"Thank you, after two weeks on a dusty road, I think that I can get through the day without a picnic," was the answer of Mrs. Thorn.

"I am weary of the hammered beef and rancid butter that we find in this tavern," said Mr. Thorn. "I've bought some venison steaks and a tub of good butter, and a side of bacon at the local market, and I've heard of a beautiful grove about two miles from here. I want to go out there and baste the steaks with some bacon and broil them over wood coals and crown them with butter and then eat until the world looks like a better place to live in. We shall come back a happier family."

"You speak like a real orator, but the girls and I will stay here," said Mrs. Thorn. "I think that rest will be better for me than venison steak. You and Hicks and Mr. Hope can have your party."

"I want to go," said Nancy.

"I wouldn't think of going without Nancy," Mr. Thorn insisted. "When I'm fighting the blues Nancy is half the battle."

So it happened that Nancy and her father and the boy Randall mounted their horses and set out together. They left little Betsy playing with the dog Teaser.

"I'm going slow with all this luggage," said Mr. Thorn to the young people. "If you get there first gather some wood for the fire and I'll be along in a few minutes. The grove is about two miles ahead on the bank of the river."

The boy and the maiden hurried on for half a mile or so, and then a sense of fleeting opportunity overtook them and they checked the pace of their horses. The boy was having the sweetest hour of his young life. His spirit was singing with the birds by the roadside. The fields and woods and sky were, in beauty, like the hallowed coast of Elis watered by brooks. The crows in a near tree seemed to be chattering of his happiness and good luck. The heart of youth was performing a miracle. It was turning the air into wine so that it was a joy to breathe. It was touching the world with its magic wand. Again he got a vision of his imaginary elf-like captain in the road ahead. A look of pleading was in its face.

The eyes of the young! What can they not see when Love comes?

"Say it, father, now is your chance to say it," were the words which the eerie one suggested.

He turned to Nancy. She was looking at him. Again their eyes met.

"I was never so happy," he said.

She did not answer, but turned her head away.

"I have just seen him again," he added.

"I have seen him, too," she answered. "How beautiful he is!"

"Did you think that he was saying something to you?"

"Yes," her face still averted.

"What did he say?"

"I—I wouldn't tell you."

"I—I thought that he called me 'father,' and that he said now was my time to speak to you."

"Why—why don't you speak?" She was still looking off at the far fields.

"I am—I am a little afraid of you. I don't want to be too forward. But I've got to speak now, because I do not think that this little spirit of another world would show himself to you and me if we had not been picked out by God to be man and wife. I love you, Nancy. That is what makes me able to hear his voice. It is because I love you. Since I came here and looked into your eyes again, I have been living in Paradise. I hope that you will let me stay in it."

She turned toward him. There were tears in her eyes. She did not speak. She held out her hand. He took it and pressed it to his lips.

They had come to the grove. Nancy dried her eyes with her handkerchief.

"How silly I am!" she exclaimed. "But, I, too, am in Paradise. I want you to tell my father what you have told me. I'll leave early and give you a chance to talk with him."

Mr. Thorn arrived. They gathered wood for the fire, singing as they worked. While the steak was cooking Randall sang one of the old love ballads which Felix had taught him, and with a voice and fervor which brought exclamations of delight from his friends. It was a happy hour the three pilgrims had together by a crackling fire in the shadow of a strange forest. The spirit of the young lovers was reacting in song and laughter and merry jests. The steaks, served with gravy on slices of bread, had the sweet flavor of the wildwood and were eagerly eaten. Then Mr. Thorn lighted his pipe and sat down, leaning comfortably against a tree trunk. They heard a distant rumble of thunder and Nancy made that her excuse for leaving.

"When I am through smoking, we'll pick up our lunch kit and be off," said Mr. Thorn. "I let nothing rob me of my postprandial smoke."

"If you can listen while you smoke, I have got something to say to you," said Randall, his face red with embarrassment.

"Say it," Mr. Thorn commanded, with a smile.

"Well—" the boy took out his jack knife, picked up a stick and began to whittle. "I—I am in love with your daughter."

"I don't blame you—so am I," the man answered. "She is a good girl; but what you say has shocked me a little."

He smoked vigorously and leaned back, looking up, thoughtfully, at the tree tops. He caught his thumbs in the arm holes of his waistcoat and made little gestures with his fingers as he went on between grateful puffs.

"It's rather sudden. Of course I knew that a time must arrive when she would be leaving us, but when the thought has come I have driven it away. She is not quite eighteen, and too young yet for marriage, and so are you."

"I know that," said Randall, "but—but would you mind our being engaged?"

"Have you any reason to believe that she would like it?"

"Yes, I—I—had to tell her to-day—that—that I loved her, sir; I couldn't help it."

The boy stammered a little with embarrassment as he began his answer, and then he got command of himself so that his words came freely.

"I didn't mean to tell her, but I couldn't help it. I had to tell her. It seemed as if my life depended on it—as if the Lord was pushing me on."

Mr. Thorn laughed. "I know how you felt, boy," he said, "I've had it myself. I don't blame you. Pardon my curiosity, but what did she say?"

"She only cried a little and reached out and took my hand and pressed it and asked me to speak to you."

Again the man laughed a little.

"Forgive me, boy," he said, "I don't mean to make light of it. I think it is very wonderful and beautiful. Hope, you're a good fellow—a big, strong, manly, honest, handsome, God-fearing lad—that's the way you impress me. I like you. Of course we don't know much about you yet. We must have information, but I assume that it would support my hopes. I don't care if you're as poor as Job's off-ox, but we must know about your character. Then I must warn you that there is an obstacle in your way."

"What is it, sir?" Randall asked.

"Your anti-slavery sentiments—your feeling against the South. Of course Mrs. Thorn is, chiefly, the one to be pleased. I warn you that it would not be easy to reconcile her to such a marriage. If I live I could be a help to you and Nancy in that matter. But perhaps I ought to drop this word to you in confidence. My life hangs by a thread that is very slender, and they do not know it. I don't want them to be worried by my personal troubles. It's a relief to talk to you about them. My doctor advised me against this trip, but I had a notion that it would do me good. It has, I fear, overtaxed me a little.

"From now on I shall go slowly. You had better leave us to-morrow morning and go on your way. Let the love story stop where it is. Let's call this the end of the first installment and hope that it will be continued in Springfield, Illinois. If you have a chance, tell Nancy that I am favorable, but waiting for information. Cut it off there. Of course an oath of everlasting allegiance is all right if you want to make it, but quit with that and go on your way and be patient."

The man took a memorandum book and a pencil from his pocket and passed them to Randall and asked him to set down the names of his minister and the family doctor at home. This the boy did and added the names of the learned Doctor John S. Lee of Canton, who often had visited their home, and of Doctor Sweet of Potsdam, who had been his teacher through two terms of school.

"Now, if your heart burns to communicate with my daughter, let it be through me, until I know all about you," said Mr. Thorn. "I shall give you our itinerary and look for letters along the road. You'll find me a pretty decent sort of a friend, and I will not let you starve for information about Nancy. It may be the time will come, soon, when she and her mother will need you."

A look of sadness came into the face of the man.

Randall was deeply impressed by the kindly words of his new friend. It was in this hour that Elijah Thorn had made himself an ideal of manhood and a lasting memory of the boy, Randall Hope. A most serious look was upon his face. He took the man's hand and said:

"I like you, sir. I shall do as you bid me, and I hope that God will give you long life."

"My dear young friend! You make me want to have it," was the answer of Elijah Thorn.

A storm was coming, and they began to pick up the dishes and were soon on their way to the inn.

CHAPTER X

THE LAST STAGE IN THE WESTWARD JOURNEY

Rain came on a cold wind out of the west before they reached the inn. Mrs. Thorn was waiting on the veranda. A look which seemed to say "I told you so" was on her face when she greeted her husband. There was a dignified reserve in her tone when she spoke to Randall. Mr. Thorn's groom took the horses and the boy got his saddle-bags and went to a store to buy provisions for his westward journey. The rain had stopped. He filled his bags, and coming out of the store, he met Hicks and bade him good-by.

"I'll see ye in Springfield," said the latter. "We've thought it over careful, an' we've decided that if Springfield is good enough for you an' the Thorns it'll do fer us."

"I'm sure that I shall like it better with you there," Randall answered.

On his way back to the inn he met Nancy and said to her:

"I had a long talk with your father. He wants to know about my character, and is going to write to some of my friends. Until he hears from them I am not to talk to you any more about my love, but he gave me leave to tell you that I shall keep it as long as I live."

"And I shall keep mine," she whispered. "Are you going?"

"Yes, I shall try to make Richmond, Indiana, to-night. It is better that I should go now. I shall be writing to your father every day. I am almost in love with him."

"I think that he is the dearest man that ever lived," the girl answered. "Don't forget the Little One. I long to hold him in my arms."

He stood looking down into her face with a smile. "I don't know what to say now," he began. "It doesn't matter much. Anyhow, let's keep happy. We shall meet soon in Springfield, and there we shall see the great Abraham Lincoln of whom everybody is talking."

"My father and I are anxious to see him, but my mother thinks that he is an enemy of the South," Nancy sighed. "She makes us so angry when she says that she would not speak to him, and sometimes we have a regular family quarrel. It is too bad."

"Well, we have what will keep us happy, anyhow," he said. "This day will be a part of every day."

"I have mailed a letter to my cousin Susy Bates in Springfield," said Nancy. "She will want to meet you. Her husband is Stephen Bates."

Randall was so preoccupied that he was but dimly conscious of her words. In silence they walked to the inn together. Randall went to the stable and saddled and bridled the mare and adjusted the saddle-bags. He mounted Tyke and rode to the front of the inn. Nancy and her mother and father were on the veranda. They bade him good-by.

He did not forget that Mrs. Thorn smiled pleasantly when she shook his hand and said, "I hope that we shall be good friends." Nancy only pressed his hand and turned quickly and ran into the house. Mr. Thorn took the hand Nancy had just released and said: "My boy, good luck to you."

Then with bent head, Randall rode slowly out to the West Road.

The going was wet, and the air chilly, but the rest of that day was like a pleasant dream to the young lover. Until night fell he was living in those memorable and delightful hours that he had spent with Nancy. They had quickened his spirit, and filled its house with treasures. A higher courage and nobler and more generous plans were coming into it, and not a base thought was among them.

There is little worth recording in what is known of the last stage of Randall Hope's westward journey. He writes in his *Memories* of the enthusiasm for Mr. Lincoln and the bitterness of his opponents which he encountered, here and there, in his travels.

He tells also of the thrill he felt in visiting Van

Amburg's great menagerie and circus in a large town in Indiana. Nothing in all his journey—save the meeting with Nancy and Felix O'Dowd—had interested him so much as the animals and athletes in Mr. Van Amburg's show. A week before then he would have been filled with a desire to train for the circus, but now he was not to be satisfied with the shallows of life. "The wild hope of the simple mountain boy," of which Mr. Emerson had spoken, was in the mind and heart of this lonely traveler, and it had come of "the love glance of a girl."

Again as he rode he read Mr. Bailey's digest of the lecture which was always in his coat pocket. A new light came to him as he read. Mr. Lincoln had been a poor mountain boy—poorer even than he, and simpler. Was he to bring about that fulness of the time to come of which the great man had spoken? And this became the wild hope of the boy riding into the west: that he might have a part in the great task of Mr. Lincoln.

On the third of September he reached his uncle's house in the capital of Illinois. In the city he had been delayed by a long Republican procession with many brass bands playing in it. Some of the delegations in line carried fence rails, one of which bore amusing effigies. Slogans, crudely lettered, were lifted above the marching crowd.

"We Are For The Tall Sucker," said one of them.

"His Ability Is Taller Than He Is," the next one declared.

"All Honest Men Should Follow Honest Abe," was the assertion of another.

Randall halted for an hour in the edge of the cheering crowd, watching the procession. When it had passed, an officer directed him to his uncle's house.

The streets were crowded with shouting men, some of whom were very drunk. Everywhere on his journey drunkenness had played a conspicuous part in political demonstrations. A large crowd was massed near the state-house, and Randall stopped to hear a male quartet singing the most popular of all the songs of that memorable campaign, of which this is a stanza as he recalled it:

Tom Ewing boils de brackish water
He drove faster dan he oughter
But Abe's de real ring-tail snorter
A-splittin' ob de rail.
De ten-foot white oak rail
He drove his glut
Clean thro' de cut
In de ten-foot white oak rail.

Randall's uncle and aunt were out with the children. A neighbor's wife, too ill to be out in the streets, was sitting on the little veranda.

Three letters were waiting for him, one from Felix O'Dowd, one from his grandfather, and one from Mr. Thorn. The latter said that Nancy and her mother were well and in good spirits, but that he was in poor health, and coming slowly. The letter of Felix, in the script of his wife, was like a song of happiness and good health. They had bought a plantation for Patrick in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley. Mrs. O'Dowd had contributed to the expense of Mr. Lincoln's campaign. The rail-splitter had sent them a beautiful letter of congratulation on learning of their marriage, and had written that he would be glad to see them in Springfield. So they were hoping soon to be able to visit the then famous capital and its great man and their beloved Randall Hope.

The boy's grandfather, Joshua, told of the return of Blue Beach, and of his account of Randall's crossing the swollen river with the filly and his dog. He said that Ezra had been behaving better, and that the family was in good health. The boy smiled at his grandfather's warning to beware of "ardent spirits." Joshua had also told in his letter how a neighbor had flogged his drudge of a son so severely that the latter had run away.

"I guess that the slavery in the North is about as bad as it is in Virginia," Randall said to himself.

The family arrived, and gave him a hearty greeting.

His Uncle Josiah was a dreamy, contemplative character, with manners and clothing so distinctly above the look of his furniture and family that he was like a noble visitor in his own house. He had an imagination like a sky-rocket. It was often rushing upward in flights of poetry and disastrous optimism. It adorned his person with handsome gray clothing and a massive, gold watch chain partly shadowed by his long, soft, dark beard. That evening he sat with a look of calm repose in the only easy chair, his hands in his pockets, gazing into the fire. When he spoke a number of coins rattled in his right trousers pocket. He speculated in grain and cattle. Around his immediate person was a glow of opulence set against a background of poverty.

Oh, yes, he knew Mr. Lincoln well. Mr. Lincoln was his friend. He knew also Senator Wade, and the great Horace Greeley. He repeated a number of lines from the latter's article entitled *Go West, Young Man.* Did Randall read poetry? No? Well that was a pity. The poets were the great thinkers. To prove it he quoted Shakespeare's *To be or not to be,* in a deep melancholy tone. His wife and children listened with an expression of awe on their faces.

The children wore threadbare clothing. The trousers of the boys were patched. Thankful Hope, his wife, had a care-worn look. Her hands and face showed that she was a hard working woman with many worries.

"Ah, there is the noblest woman that ever lived," said Uncle Josiah, with a fond look at his wife.

"You behave," she answered laconically, as she went on with her knitting.

He partly turned and said with a gentle smile: "Elizabeth, come here."

The youngest of the five children, a little girl of three, came to his side. Tenderly he lifted her to his lap and kissed her.

"I tell you I've got the most beautiful family of children in Illinois," he continued. "All as good as gold—every one of them."

He took a cigar from his waistcoat, stirred the sounding coins in the right side pocket of his trousers and drew out a shining pen-knife. With this he cut off the end of his cigar and lighted it with a pine splinter.

"You find us between hay and grass," he continued as he smoked. "We have not yet been able to realize on our investments, but we will. Have you seen anything of the oil country in Pennsylvania?"

"No," said Randall.

"It's a wonderful region," the man went on. "I have put every penny I could scrape up into oil lands. I guess they're going to make us rich. Did you know, sir, that eight thousand new mills and factories were built in America last year? Machinery! Shafts! Wheels! Oil! Oil is the great need of this growing country. I have put my money on the right horse. Some day we shall be rolling in wealth. Meanwhile we are happy and comfortable."

Randall looked at the family; at the worn and patched furniture, and discerned that in his last remark his uncle had used the wrong pronoun. Uncle Josiah flicked the ashes from his cigar and added: "Our neighbors are not exactly up to our level of refinement and cultivation, but we get along with them."

Aunt Thankful Hope was a thin, sad-faced, energetic woman. There were five children in the house, the oldest of whom was a friendly, sturdy young man of twenty, named Joshua for his old grandfather in St. Lawrence County. He was learning the carpenter's trade with his mother's brother.

That night, after supper, Randall sat by the fireside with the family and told of his travels and adventures and heard his Aunt Thankful's story of a thousand-mile journey behind a yoke of oxen in '46, with her father and mother, when they slept with guns in their hands for fear of hostile Indians, and one of them sat up and watched at night and got cat's eyes looking into the darkness, and "kind o' 'star-sick' waitin' for mornin'." That evening Randall got his first notion of the anxiety and patient toil that had gone into the making of the West.

"I tell ye now it took grit to git here them days, an' grit to stay," his Aunt Thankful remarked. "I guess I et my peck o' dirt on the way. Oh, dear! It was awful."

"But it's a great country, and worth all it cost," said Josiah Hope.

"It is the home of Abraham Lincoln. All along the road I've been hearing about him," said the boy Randall. "I'd like to see him."

Uncle Josiah said that they had cheered themselves hoarse for Honest Abe, but that if the children wished to give three more cheers for him, he, Josiah Hope, would make no objection.

"Stop yer nonsense," Mrs. Hope interposed. "If I give one more yell I'd have to have a doctor. You behave."

"The whole town is hoarse to-night, but in a noble cause," her husband answered.

In the moment of silence that followed his remark they could hear the sound of distant cheering.

"An' gittin' hoarser," Mrs. Hope retorted. "It's just as bad sense to git drunk on politics as whisky. You behave."

She was busy with her knitting. Her hands paused as she looked thoughtfully into the fire and added:

"Mr. Lincoln ain't so much to look at. He's tall an' spare an' bony an' kind o' humly lookin', but he talks good sense, an' he can make ye laugh er cry when he does, an' he ain't a bit stuck up. Don't pretend to be any better than the rest of us common folks."

"Common folks!" Uncle Josiah exclaimed. "Mother, you don't appreciate your position in this community. Have you forgotten that the greatest man in America has warmed his feet at our fireside?"

"Well, Josiah, there ain't no use in denyin' that we're poor—as poor as Job's turkey. I know it, if you don't."

She gave her yarn an energetic pull while Uncle Josiah stroked his beard with a look of distress.

"He did come here one day when Josiah was sick with the lung fever and wanted to know if there was anything he could do," Aunt Thankful went on in a milder tone. "An' Miss Ridgely come, an' other great folks, but that ain't no reason why we should feel so proud."

She had never told her husband or any one that Mr. Lincoln had given her twenty dollars that day. Uncle Josiah sat with a look of dejection while Aunt Thankful went on:

"Abe Lincoln would go to see any one who was sick. He's a great man—the greatest man I ever see—but he's a new kind of a great man."

"A rail-splitter—one of the common people—that's what I've been hearing along the road," said Randall.

"He don't forget it," Mrs. Hope continued. "He can be just as friendly to a feller with his sleeves rolled up an' his face covered with sweat an' dirt as he can be to a man in broadcloth an' b'iled linen. He don't care much about the cover that's on a person. What's inside of him is the thing he thinks on. An' he's every day alike. When my brother and Joshua was workin' on his roof one day, he comes out an' hollers up to 'em: 'Say, boys, I'm all alone to-day, an' there's lamb chops an' strawberry shortcake fer dinner. Come down an' eat with me. I've got a good story to tell ye!' They went in, an' he kep' 'em laughin' with funny stories all through the meal."

"The fact is," said Randall, who had begun to appreciate the stark honesty of his aunt, and the prodigious optimism of his uncle, "there is a man that loves his neighbor as himself."

"An' that's about as hard a job as the Lord ever give us," said Mrs. Hope, energetically stripping the yarn off its ball. "It's too much for me."

"Do you think I could see him if I went to his house?" Randall asked.

"Well, of course, he's terrible busy these days," Mrs. Hope answered, as she stirred the roots of her hair over one ear with a needle. "Crowds an' crowds o' folks go there every day on business; all the great men o' the nation is rappin' on his door, I guess. But, land sakes! He'd be glad to see ye if he had time. He knows all about St. Lawrence County an' its great men an' its vote in the last election. He has spoke of that to Josiah."

"We'll go over early to-morrow an' see if we can slip in for a minute an' just shake hands an' say 'How d'y'do,' " Uncle Josiah remarked.

There was still much noise in the streets when the family of Josiah Hope and its guest retired. Randall shared a bed with young Joshua in a large room above stairs where all the children slept. He talked a while with his cousin, and fell asleep to dream that Nancy Thorn was sitting in the chair by his bedside.

CHAPTER XI

RANDALL HOPE GETS ACQUAINTED WITH ABRAHAM LINCOLN

NEXT morning Randall went with his uncle to see Mr. Lincoln. They were admitted to the plain, two-story frame dwelling in which the candidate resided, at nine o'clock. A middle-aged woman in a spotless white cap and apron gave Mr. Hope and his nephew a quiet welcome, and asked them to sit down in a room which, even at that early hour, was nearly filled with men—some in plain attire, some in broadcloth and white linen, their heads proudly poised and their sense of self-distinction expressed in fancy waistcoats and massive gold watch chains and seals and diamond breast-pins. Randall wondered, as he sat looking at them, if these latter had patched furniture and children and rough-handed, care-worn wives. The house was silent save for the low tones in which certain of the callers were conversing.

"This is a delegation from Ohio," the woman whispered to Josiah Hope. "Another from Indiana will be here at ten."

"We only want to present our compliments," Josiah Hope answered; whereat the lady smiled.

"This boy is my nephew from St. Lawrence County, New York. We won't keep him half a minute."

"St. Lawrence County!" the lady exclaimed. "My father came from the town of Lisbon. Maybe you could slip in with this delegation and have a word with Mr. Lincoln before they begin their talk. I'll see," the woman whispered.

The latter left the room. Randall shook with excitement at the prospect of looking into the face of his hero and touching his hand. The doors opened, disclosing the dining-room and the candidate seated at a table. Randall's first impression of his face was that it looked very thin and sad and weary. The great man was neatly dressed in black broadcloth with black stock and standing collar. His smoothly shaven face was sallow and deeply lined.

"Gentlemen, Mr. Lincoln will see you now," the woman announced.

Josiah Hope and Randall went in with the delegation.

The spokesman—a splendid figure of a man—with a full, smooth-shaven face and bald crown—addressed the candidate.

"Mr. Lincoln, this is a delegation from Ohio—save these two men," (pointing to Josiah and Randall Hope) "who have elected themselves to our party."

Randall, now red with embarrassment, waited a second or two for his uncle to say something, but the latter, apparently overawed, held his tongue.

The boy spoke out—"Mr. Lincoln, I am a delegate of one from Hopkinton, St. Lawrence County, New York, and I only want to shake your hand and tell you that—that I love you, sir."

Somehow these words had come to him, and through them his soul had spoken in a trembling voice. That sentence had been full of the pure eloquence of boyhood. It carried the fragrance of youth and sincerity most grateful to the candidate who had been cloyed by the transparent flattery and low greed of politicians. Mr. Lincoln hurried to his side, and for a moment seemed to be unaware of the presence of the statesmen from Ohio.

"My son, I am glad to shake the hand of any one from St. Lawrence County," he said. "It is a great county—the home of Wright and King and of people who know how to vote. Come again when I am not so busy."

He walked with them to the door by which they had entered.

"He's my nephew," said Josiah Hope. "He's staying at my house."

Mr. Lincoln put his hand on the boy's shoulder and asked, with a kindly look in his blue-gray eyes: "Can you play ball, my son?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come some morning at eight o'clock and we'll play together."

The two went away. Their interview with the candidate had lasted about one minute.

"I am glad to have been of some service to you," said Uncle Josiah, with the air of one cheering his own success. "Once when I was in his office I repeated part of Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. 'Hope,' he said, 'You are a constant source of astonishment.' "

Two days later, at eight o'clock in the morning, Randall found Mr. Lincoln with his small boy, Tad, playing barn ball back of his house. He was throwing the ball against the side of the barn and catching it as it came down. Tad, an energetic little lad of seven, raced for the ball with merry shouts when his father missed it.

Mr. Lincoln stopped his play to greet Randall, as the latter came near.

"Tad, here is our friend and fellow-citizen from St. Lawrence County, New York," said the candidate. "Now, we'll play One Old Cat."

In this game one pitched and another caught, while a third batted and, after hitting, had to run to a chosen base and back before he was touched with the ball. Tad was the first at bat, with his father catching. They had a busy half-hour, and when at last Tad ran into the house because of what he considered an unfair decision, Mr. Lincoln and Randall played at throwing and catching the ball.

"This reminds me of what I am doing all day," said Mr. Lincoln. "The statesmen throw compliments at me and I am expected to throw a promise back at them. They would like the ball to turn to gold in my hands, and if it doesn't they look disappointed."

"I must leave you now," said the candidate, after their play had continued for about twenty minutes. "You can throw a ball as straight as an Indian shoots an arrow. I think that you must be a good player."

"I played at school," Randall answered.

"My son, I have heard much about you," said Mr. Lincoln. "Felix O'Dowd and his bride had supper with us last night. I was glad to hear what they said of you."

"I did not know that they were in Springfield," Randall answered.

"They are down at the big tavern."

Tad had returned and was clinging to his father's knees and begging him to play some more.

"My son, I must go in and change my clothes," said Mr. Lincoln to the small boy. "Perhaps Mr. Hope would play with you a few minutes."

Mr. Lincoln went into the house, saying to Randall, "If you have enjoyed it come again. I'm something of a stick puller myself, but I expect you'll be too much for me."

There was an echo of the night in Cincinnati.

Tad was an "interesting, tireless, playful, little scamp of a boy," whose tongue could not keep up with his thoughts.

"It was a lame tongue, and not easy to understand until one got accustomed to his curious manner of speech."

The two played with the ball a time and then Tad wished to know if Randall would please give a penny to see his show. The penny was given, and Randall was then conducted to a corner inside the barn. There, nailed to a box, was a board which bore the legend in rude letters printed with a wood coal:

Grate Sho of Snaix

The box contained two small grass snakes recently killed, and a large toad whose name was said to be Uncle Toby. Randall left when Tad went to show the penny to his father.

The young man proceeded to the tavern to call upon his good friends. He found them getting ready to go to Chicago. They had sent a carriage to his uncle's house for him that morning. Felix was in high spirits.

"Ah, me brave lad! We've crossed the border," he said.

"What border?" Randall asked.

"The border o' Paradise. Sure it's in this world o' ours, an' Love is the gate o' it. But ye'll no be in the heart o' that till your feet have crossed the desert and are down with ours in the beautiful green valleys. I think there'll be good news o' Nancy an' the little witch?"

They were in a private apartment and the simple country boy was impressed by its grandeur of golden furniture upholstered with blue plush "softer than any feather bed." It was known in that tavern as the bridal chambers. Mrs. O'Dowd was very grand in "a dress of blue silk over hoops." She wanted to know about Nancy, and kissed the boy and reminded him again of their parental interest in his welfare.

He told them of his delightful days with Nancy and of his hopes and fears.

"It is a sweet tale, me lad, but the little witch may have his troubles with an old grandmother shakin' her stick at him," said Felix. "'Twould no be a good thing if the darlin' had always an easy time o' it. Sure, if God loves a man He will put briars in his way to build up the soul in him."

"I have asked only one favor of the man who is soon to be president," said Mrs. O'Dowd. "That he will do what he can for our beloved Randall Hope of Hopkinton. He has suggested that you learn to be a telegrapher. It is a new and growing business."

"I should like to do it," Randall answered.

"He will try to get you a place in the offices of the Magnetic Telegraph Company of this city," was the assurance of Mrs. O'Dowd.

She did not explain to the boy that she had promised to pay his salary until he had learned the art and had become a useful member of the staff.

Telegraph operators were regarded with awe and envy those days. They were called "Lightning Hurlers." They got good pay and wore fine boots with high heels and white linen and fancy vests and handsome neckties. Often Randall had admired their clothes, their dignity and their sublime reticence.

"I have just been over to Mr. Lincoln's house, playing ball with him and his little son," said the boy. "He is a new kind of a great man. I don't believe that Daniel Webster would have played barn ball or One Old Cat with a couple of boys when he was in the midst of big things."

"I think it's the will o' God to show us a man who can be great with never a thought o' it," said Felix. "A man whose pride would no be hidin' the face o' God from him. The world has need o' a man who knows an' loves his brothers—a humble man with the gift o' charity an' words—the heavenly words o' love an' mercy an' good will—God help us!"

The blind man's face grew red with his fervor as he spoke.

"I have heard no better words than came out o' the mouth o' him," he went on. "You an' I know what bitterness an' deviltry is abroad. I've been told o' the wailin' o' mothers when the soft little childer were sold away in the sight o' their eyes! Sure it's enough to turn one to vinegar."

Randall took from his pocket the digest of Mr. Emerson's lecture which he had heard in Utica, and read these words—

> By and by there shall arrive a bolder spirit—a surrendered soul, more informed and led by God and filled with His patience, much in advance of all the rest, even quite beyond their sympathy, who holds in his vision the general fulness of the time to come.

"A prophet!" Felix exclaimed. "We have seen the surrendered soul. God give you a good part in the fulness o' the time to come, me brave lad. We'll be stoppin' to see ye on our way home, and then I'll be knowin' the feel o' Nancy's hand, I hope."

They parted. Randall walked about the city and looked through the state-house and went into the Magnetic Telegraph Office and watched with a feeling of envy the proud operators as they clicked their keys or read the tape pouring down through the receivers. He returned to his uncle's house at dinner. There he found a letter of introduction to the manager of the local telegraph office, signed A. Lincoln. He presented his letter that afternoon. They needed a man and would immediately send his application to the General Manager in Chicago and report as soon as possible.

The next day a letter—a very brief letter—came from Mrs. Thorn. Her husband had suddenly passed away at the tavern in Danville, and she and Nancy were going to their home with his remains on the railroad. They were sending their team, wagon and saddle-horses to Springfield, where they hoped to arrive in a month or so.

This news depressed the boy. He had conceived a fondness for the man who had given him friendly and sympathetic counsel when he was much in need of it. He gave great pains to the wording of a long letter to Mrs. Thorn. The lady said in her answer that it was a noble letter for a boy of his age to have written. "I am sure that you must have cried when you wrote it," she added, "for when I was reading it aloud to Nancy I had to stop more than once to wipe my glasses."

That week he was summoned to the Magnetic Telegraph Office to meet the General Manager and was engaged at a salary sufficient to pay his board and washing. The manager had told him that he must learn to take by sound, as the old method was rapidly going out. While he was studying the art his work was mainly keeping the office clean, recharging batteries and scraping electrodes and delivering messages. Many of the latter went to Mr. Lincoln's house. He ran when he carried telegrams and was soon known as "the flying messenger." It was probably for this reason that the candidate requested that all his messages should be delivered by Mr. Hope.

The chief operator, whose name was Bates, took a friendly interest in the boy. Bates was a young man about six years older than Randall. He had a wife and two small children.

"Randall Hope," he said when they met, "your name is as well advertised in our family as Mrs. Waggles' Soothing Syrup. You ran away with a nigger slave and traveled with a blind Irishman and his harp and can sing like an angel, and pull sticks with a professional athlete, and lick an Ohio River bully. On top of all that you fell in love with a cousin of my wife. You have quite a record. What I want to know is—can ye play ball?"

"That's pretty tall talk. It doesn't exactly fit me—not all of it," said Randall. "Is Nancy Thorn your wife's cousin?"

"She is, and we expect to see her soon."

"Well I'm in love with her all right," Randall answered. "You can let that stand. Did you know that her father was dead?"

"Yes, Nancy wrote us. They have gone back and will come on by rail later."

"I was in love with him, too," said Randall sadly.

"Well, you haven't answered me. Can you play ball?"

"I used to think that I could. I'd like to try."

"I'll get you off to practise with us at four to-morrow," said Bates. "Come to supper with me to-night. My wife is fond of love stories, and she's crazy to know what's going to happen to you and Nancy."

"So am I," the boy answered.

Randall had a pleasant evening with the Bateses, who lived in a small cottage not far from the home of Josiah Hope. Mrs. Bates was a humorous, merry-hearted, good-looking young woman of twenty-three—a born housekeeper and an excellent mother.

"Is this Randall Hope of Hopkinton?" she asked when her husband presented the boy.

"Yes."

"Well, I'm sorry for you."

"Why?"

"You've got to behave like the Black Knight in Ivanhoe, and look like Napoleon Bonaparte on the deck of the Bellerophon," Mrs. Bates laughed. "When you came I expected to hear a flourish of trumpets and to see a gallant young knight on a white steed. Now here you are with a dirty face, looking like all the rest of us hard working people."

"It has a right to be dirty," Randall answered, blushing, "I forget that I've got a face these days. I've delivered twenty-four messages this afternoon, and cleaned the batteries."

"Take him into our room and get him washed and brushed and combed—and hurry, please," she said to her husband. "Then I'm going to turn the lights up high and take a good look at him."

"I know now that you are Susy Bates," said Randall, when he and his friend had come out ready for supper. "If I had known it before I should have come here in my Sunday clothes, and would have brought a clean face with me."

"You can show us your clothes some other day. I want to see *you*."

The lights were turned up. She took the boy's arm and led him near the table where the light was strongest.

"Now lift your chin a little and try to imagine that you are seeing Nancy," she laughed. He was laughing also as she stood looking at him. "Stephen, the girl is not so crazy, after all," she added. "Now, Randall, please tell me how Nancy looks—I hope you will not mind my calling you Randall, since you are in love with my cousin. I think that I have a right to do it."

"And it makes me very proud," Randall answered. "Nancy! Oh, she is like the fair lady of Ivanhoe. Of her beauty and noble heart I dare not speak for fear of doing them injustice. My words are not able to describe them."

Mrs. Bates said to her husband, as if speaking of the mischief of a child, "He has fallen into the frog pond. He'll have to be spanked."

She stood looking at Randall and laughing—a pretty figure of a woman; fair-haired, blue-eyed, red-cheeked, slender-waisted, and neatly dressed.

"I know how you feel," she went on. "It's fun to fall in love and get married, and it's fun to see it going on. Don't you give Nancy any rest. But we must eat to keep the candle burning. Come on, supper is ready."

She hurried into the little kitchen, bringing out beefsteak, potatoes and boiled onions and pie, all of which had been cooked by her own hands. Her husband, a well-built young man with dark hair and eyes, assisted in bringing out the food and placing the chairs. The children had been put to bed.

"I have not seen Nancy since she was twelve years old," said Mrs. Bates. "You must forget that you are in love and stop dreaming and tell me about her. Come now, don't be so secretive and selfish. Let us enjoy it with you."

Randall did his best at this rather difficult task that she had given him. They had a merry hour at the table, clouded only by their talk of the good man who had so lately passed. That evening Randall and Stephen Bates were to be on duty until midnight, and so after supper the two returned to the office.

Every day Randall came into the presence of the famous and kindly Mr. Lincoln. Whoever might be conferring with him, the boy was always admitted, and without a moment's delay.

"My son, you're like an extension of the wire," said the candidate one day when Randall stood before him. "Sit down and rest a minute. You're breathing like a race horse.

"Here's a curious message from Bridgewater, Pennsylvania," said Mr. Lincoln, and then he read:

> Until lately I have been in favor of Breckinridge but have decided to contribute generously to your campaign if I may know that you will not under any circumstances undertake to free the slaves or encourage them to revolt. Elizabeth Thorn.

Randall took a chair. As he did so, two large portly men were shown into the room.

"Mr. Lincoln, we are Democrats from the southern end of New Jersey," said one of them.

"Well, gentlemen, I wonder that the state didn't tip up when you stepped off it," the candidate answered with a laugh, as he shook hands with them.

"Mr. Lincoln, we have come to ask if under all circumstances you propose to show and enforce respect for the property of the South," was the inquiry of one of these gentlemen.

"My friends, that reminds me of a story," Mr. Lincoln began. "There was once a boy who on leaving home promised his father that he wouldn't swear under any circumstances. In a few years he returned on a visit.

" 'Well, son, have you kept your promise?' the father asked.

" 'I did until I scalded my foot one day,' his son answered. 'I started on a run for the river and ran into a hornet's nest. The critters hurried me so that I tore a big hole in my pants and a hornet got into it. Then I let go, or I'd 'a' died. There ain't no feller can tell what he'll do in a fix like that—not if he's an honest, sensible, God-fearing man.'

"Now I have only good will for the South. Its rights are as sacred to me as those of any other section of our country. It is no part of my program to free the slaves. But I don't like the phrase 'under any circumstances.' It is unfair to me, and the men who sent you here know it. They wish either to tie my hands or create a false impression of my purposes."

Mr. Lincoln would say no more on that subject, and the men went away.

Randall writes that Mr. Lincoln's interviews with the many people who were coming to see him those days often began and ended with loud laughter. The boy wondered if the message of Mrs. Thorn were a part of the tactics of Mr. Lincoln's enemies set in motion by Mr. Breckinridge or by the ingenious Stephen B. Rhett.

The boy had made rapid progress in learning the art of telegraphy. Soon he had bought a sounder and installed a short line between his room, in the house of a neighbor of his uncle where he could be alone, and the home of Stephen Bates. On this little circuit he got the practise he needed.

The boy had seen that his aunt had work enough to do, and that she could not afford to keep him without pay, so he took his meals in a restaurant near the office. He had rented Tyke to an elderly gentleman who lived on the street, and who rode a few miles, slowly, for exercise every afternoon. Teaser spent the day with the children of Josiah Hope and the nights with Randall in his room.

The election had passed, and Mr. Lincoln was to be the next president. He had moved his office to a room in the capitol and was to have a wire and an operator near his desk. The city was crowded. Delegations of great men were arriving daily.

Mr. Sumner of Massachusetts, Mr. Chase of Ohio, Mr. Chandler of Michigan, Mr. Weed and Mr. Greeley of New York had mingled with common folk in the streets. Every day had its own color and its peculiar excitements. The shouts of revelry by night, the music of brass bands, the sound of cheering voices had bred a kind of campaign weariness in the once quiet little city.

Then came a day of relief in which the currents of emotion sped with increased voltage in a new and smaller channel—the much advertised game of baseball between the Springfield Stars and the Danville Haymakers. It was a new and welcome diversion, a case of *similia similibus curantur* for the good folk of the capital. Since '58 there had been a keen rivalry between these clubs. The game was called for a Saturday afternoon at two o'clock.

It was a warm, bright Indian Summer day. Mr. Lincoln and certain of his distinguished friends—the great Thurlow Weed of Albany, the magnificent Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, the deep voiced Zach Chandler of Michigan, the fiery Ben Wade of Ohio—were among the spectators. The rivalry had never been so intense. The winning team was to have the silver ball and bat—symbols of the state championship—and the honor of contending with the famous Forest City club of Cleveland. It was like an election day after a long campaign. The contestants played as if the eyes of the world were on them.

For weeks Randall had spent an hour a day at practise with Stephen Bates in the empty lot back of the latter's house. He had done night work so that he could have his afternoons free.

A multitude of cheering partisans were on the field when the game began. Senator Chandler had briefly addressed the crowd. He was glad to witness a new kind of campaign—a friendly contest governed by rules of fair play—not always observed in politics. It was good that the young manhood of our country should have practise in the noble art of using their strength and controlling the heat of rivalry. Our fathers had had to play with the ax, the horseshoe and the gun. Now that the wilderness was disappearing it was well that their sons should learn to play with implements less stern and in contests even more arduous and exciting.

It was a long game interrupted often by losing the ball. Once it had to be recovered from a gopher hole in the outfield. The game was delayed also by heated arguments and injured fingers. The score was 27 to 24 in favor of the Haymakers when Randall went to the bat in the last half of the ninth inning with two out and the bases filled. Springfield had never had a more thrilling moment. Was the capital of Illinois, and the home of Abraham Lincoln, to be humbled by a lot of haymakers from Danville? It couldn't be. The crowd had begun to babble. A number of women were uttering cries that suggested hysteria. Every spectator was on his feet and shouting some word of encouragement to Randall when he walked to the plate with his bat on his shoulder.

"It's just my luck to be caught in a pinch like this," he said to himself. "I wish it was some other fellow."

He saw the president-elect, who stood in his new silk hat, towering above the little group of his distinguished friends. Mr. Lincoln took out his handkerchief and waved it.

"I waved my hand and then I stooped over and brushed the dust off the plate and said to myself, 'God help me.' I don't know why I should have tried to drag Him into that little matter, but there was no one else I could appeal to."

"Keep your eye on the ball, my son," a familiar voice shouted as Randall stood with poised bat, his massive shoulders turned, his waist and supple wrists bent for the springing of his bow.

Randall's bat crashed into the first ball that came from the pitcher. It soared far out beyond the left fielder and bounded over a distant fence and burrowed into a heap of loose straw. It was a home run. The dignity of the capital had been upheld. A great crowd pressed about Randall to touch his brawny arms and shoulders and shake his hand. It made way in a moment for Mr. Lincoln and his friends who came to congratulate the young athlete.

"My son," said Mr. Lincoln, "you are one of the few great men who have not asked me for a place in the Cabinet."

"If you'll appoint me your friend it's all I ask," Randall answered.

"There's no salary with that office," Mr. Lincoln laughed. "Here are a number of intellectual athletes from the East who want to meet you. They are the heroes of many an exciting contest."

It was then that Randall Hope met for the first time the distinguished Senators Sumner, Wade and Chandler and the far-famed Thurlow Weed of Albany.

"You will make a great ball player," said Mr. Lincoln.

"I had good luck to-day," answered Randall.

"My son, God help you to keep the strength and vigor and the honest face of youth," Mr. Lincoln added.

Two stalwart members of the team lifted Randall to their shoulders and bore him through the shouting crowd toward the dressing-room in the judges' stand. At its door where he was let down, Stephen Bates stood with Mrs. Thorn at his side. The lady greeted the boy with a smiling face and said, "We are all proud of you."

"Is Nancy here?" he asked eagerly.

"She is not in Springfield," Mrs. Thorn answered.

"Where is she?"

"I do not dare tell you now. She is in school, and well and as happy as could be expected. I want to keep her there for a time."

When he came out of the dressing-room the crowd had gone, but Mr. and Mrs. Ebenezer Hicks were waiting outside the door.

"Sic semper tyrannis!" he exclaimed. "If I had known that you could use a club so skilful I'd 'a' been scared o' ye."

"How so?"

"'Cause my head is made o' leather an' is kind o' temptin' fer a man with a club."

"I refuse to believe it," said Randall.

Ebenezer answered: "You'll believe it when I tell ye that I got lost an' went more'n twenty mile out o' my way. But here we be in the heart o' Illinois. I told Mary it would do some palpitatin' when we got here, an' it has."

"Where are you stopping?" Randall asked.

"We got here yesterday an' hired a small house with a barn on Strawberry Street. We're goin' to hang on to Springfield till we git scratched off. Then we'll look fer another dog."

A big omnibus had come for the players. The mayor and many of the leading citizens were giving them a supper at the big tavern. Night was falling. Randall gave his address to Mr. and Mrs. Hicks and promised to see them soon, as the omnibus drove away. Josiah Hope and his family met Randall at the tavern entrance.

Josiah Hope put his hands on the shoulders of his nephew and said: "You saved the day."

"You're wrong. It was good luck that saved the day," said Randall.

"Good luck knows what tree to light in," Aunt Thankful remarked. "I'm glad you ain't conceited."

They parted and Randall and his friends went in to eat and receive the felicitations of the leading citizens. The boy made his first speech that evening.

An unexpected guest was one of that dinner party—Fritz Roemer who had become a detective in the employ of the famous Pinkerton agency. He had followed a suspicious character to Springfield and arrested him near Mr. Lincoln's office in the state-house that afternoon. His work accomplished, Fritz had come to the big hotel for the night. There the demonstration in honor of the most popular young man in Springfield attracted his attention.

That evening Randall learned with astonishment that the president's life was in danger.

CHAPTER XII

THE TEMPTATION OF RANDALL HOPE

SPRINGFIELD in 1860 was a crude little wooden city, mostly unpaved. Its chief enemies were mud and dust. Better known than even Lincoln and Herndon was this thriving partnership of Mud and Dust. Its sign was at every door. Its fame and even its flavor was on every tongue. Its business was the discouragement of women.

The gum shoe, the duster and a patient disposition were useful items in the equipment of those who inhabited the growing city. Its women were a unit in favor of better footing. Mud in the streets meant mud in the houses. The business center had plank sidewalks and crossings. Gradually these had been extended into the best residential streets. The upper strata of Springfield society was now leading a comparatively mudless life.

The Lincoln home was a plain two-story house, sheathed in well-painted clapboards. It had its barn, a small garden and a narrow dooryard. It was a comfortable, unpretentious home, like those of his neighbors. It had one maid, a lively, hard-working Portuguese girl with an amusing dialect.

Early in the campaign Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln gave a reception to the people of Springfield. That afternoon Randall went to help Mrs. Lincoln in decorating the house with flowers and grasses and oak leaves. Mr. Lincoln, whose office was then in the state-house, came home early and lent a hand in the preparations. He took off his coat and put on his slippers and helped Randall in changing the position of some of the furniture.

The young man hurried home to put on his best clothes. When he returned there were lighted lanterns in front of all the neighbors' houses on the street and the front windows were aglow with candle-light. Mr. Lincoln, in his best broadcloth trousers and vest, was helping the Portuguese maid and a neighbor's hired girl, to dress the dining-room table with frosted cakes and apple pies and roasted ham and chickens.

Mrs. Lincoln came down-stairs, her gown of white silk heavy with brocaded flowers, and spread by hoops into a rustling, broad-based cone. A graceful vine with delicate leaves was wound in her hair.

"Good gracious, Abraham!" she exclaimed. "Are you going to receive our guests in your shirt-sleeves and slippers? What in the world have you got on your vest?"

She hurried to his side and examined the garment.

"My land! It's cake frosting," she declared with a note of despair in her voice.

"It does look as if it had been nipped a little," said the candidate, looking down at it with a smile.

"What's the matter with a frosted vest anyway? 'A little more, here and there, would make it real fancy."

"You come up-stairs with me this minute," said Mrs. Lincoln as if she were speaking to a bad boy.

"You let me lick the vest and you can lick me," said Mr. Lincoln as he followed her up the stairway.

Tad and Willie, who were inclined, always, to take sides with their father in cases of domestic discipline wherein his conduct was involved, hurried after them.

The people began to arrive. They were received in the large sitting-room. It was a plain room with simple furnishings, but it had a pleasant atmosphere. A high secretary stood in the corner, its shelves filled with books—Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Byron, Lives of Washington by Weems and Marshall, Essays of Emerson and Macaulay, a few of the novels of Charles Dickens and Washington Irving, two volumes of Artemus Ward.

There were family portraits and some interesting political cartoons hanging on the walls.

A round center table held a large family Bible and some volumes of poetry.

The fine ladies of Springfield were dressed in tulle and silk festooned with flower garlands. Many wore head-dresses of lace.

Mr. Lincoln received his guests with a gracious dignity.

Some very plain, hard-fisted people, in ill-fitting clothes, came to that party. There were men who had never before worn boiled shirts and collars. They were graciously received. One of them told Mrs. Lincoln that he would be glad if he could have his supper early as he had to leave at nine to drive to Petersburg with a load of groceries.

Randall writes that most of the men had beards and that some of them were disfigured by long hair. "They were, in the main, a solemn-faced lot. Dozens of those I saw there were to be rent and torn, or killed in battle. As I think of them it seems as if they knew what was going to happen."

A campaign quartet was present. They sang some of Mr. Lincoln's favorite songs—*Just Forty Years Ago, Tom, The Sword of Bunker Hill, Ben Bolt* and *The Lament of the Irish Emigrant.*

Mrs. Thorn was at the party with Susy and Stephen Bates. Randall sat with them as they ate.

"I wonder why you will not let me know where Nancy is?" he asked.

"Go for her," Susy Bates urged. "I've been scolding her all the evening. She will not even tell me where Nancy is."

"I know you too well," Mrs. Thorn answered, with a smiling glance at her niece. "Mr. Hope, it should content you to know that she is improving her education and mentioning you in every one of her letters."

"Nothing will content me but a look at her."

"What a Romeo you are!" Mrs. Thorn exclaimed. "There's time enough. You are both very young."

"Oh, but it isn't fair to rob us of the best joy of youth," the boy urged. "There could be no harm in our seeing each other. I'll make any promise you demand."

"Will you? Meet me at Mrs. Bates' home to-morrow at four and we'll have an understanding. I want to know you better."

The general manager of the Telegraph Company who had come down from Chicago that day was at the party. As he was leaving he said to Randall: "I am glad to tell you that you are to be the chief night operator at a salary of eighty dollars a month. You will bear in mind that good and faithful service will always find its reward in this company."

These words gave the young man a greater happiness than any he had known save that which came with his discovery when Nancy and he were riding together. Now he would have something to say to Mrs. Thorn which ought to convince her that his plea was not to be lightly thought of—that he was a man, not merely a love-sick boy. The matter of saying it was important. How should it be done? Well, modestly, as a real man would say it, and with no pride in his manner—as if he were not at all set up by his good fortune. He chose the words he would use, weighing them as if they were precious metal. Next day he bought a new necktie and collar, and went to his lodgings at three and brushed his hair and dressed with meticulous pains. At precisely four o'clock he presented himself at Mrs. Bates' door. Susy Bates opened it.

"How grand you look!" she exclaimed. "Here is the new night operator," she said to her aunt, who sat by a grate fire in the parlor. "Eighty dollars a month! What do you think of that?"

"I congratulate you," Mrs. Thorn said to the boy as she gave him her hand. "Your progress has been most unusual."

"Well, I have had good friends to help me along," Randall answered, with a look at Mrs. Bates, and then he asked the latter—"How did you know it?"

"Oh, Stephen and I knew what was coming when the G. M. got here," she answered.

"You see it's all due to my judgment in picking out the right friends," he said to Mrs. Thorn.

The fine words he had thought of had been robbed of their appointed place by the unexpected revelations of his friend.

"It is a great thing to know how to choose friends and to please and astonish them with your accomplishments," Mrs. Thorn answered.

Susy Bates ran to her side and kissed her, saying: "Aunty, that is just what he has done. I am going to leave you so that you may have your talk, and I want you to be good to him."

"My dear, why shouldn't I be good to him?"

"You know I hate stern parents," Mrs. Bates laughed as she hurried into the kitchen.

"It made me sad to learn of Mr. Thorn's death," the boy began. "I felt as if I had lost a dear friend."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said Mrs. Thorn. "He was fond of you. He liked you almost as much as Nancy did."

"He said that he would write to some of my friends for information."

"We were pleased with what we learned of your character."

"Then, will you let me be engaged to Nancy?"

"On certain conditions I would answer 'Yes.' "

Looking through the dining-room Randall had observed that the kitchen door was open.

"What conditions?" he asked.

"I must explain," Mrs. Thorn began. "My future home is to be in Atlanta where my brothers live, until Nancy marries, if she ever does. Then she wishes me to live with her or near her, and it would be my wish. We are all that is left of the family. I was born in the South. Its traditions and its spirit are dear to me. You are a northern boy, and you have the most mistaken and bitter prejudice against my people. You are allied with a party which is openly hostile to them. I expect that it may try to oppress them and deprive them of their property."

"I am not bitter," Randall answered. "I would not deprive any one of his property. If the slaves are freed I would want their owners to be paid for them. I think that Nancy would agree with me in politics."

"That is my great fear. Now, suppose you were to marry her and these political troubles should become more acute, as they seem likely to do. What would happen? We should be a divided house. Dissension would follow and perhaps I should have to secede from the family. If so, my dreams would be shattered. I should be a kind of outcast, and my fortune might be used to destroy the ideals and humble the friends most dear to me. There is my problem."

"You and your husband did not agree in politics, and yet you lived happily," Randall remarked, now beginning to feel the serious nature of the situation.

"True, but it was becoming more and more difficult. The new president will not promise to let the slaves alone. I can foresee a divided union and a bitterness of party strife the like of which we have never known. It may even lead to bloodshed."

She was an able woman and as firm as she was able. The great things comprehended in her prevision were new to the boy. Suddenly the future had grown as dark as the room in which they sat, lighted dimly by the flickering fire. He did not speak. A shadow on the screen began to stir.

"What is to be done?" the woman asked. "Are you to yield, or is a marriage between you and Nancy impossible?"

Now, suddenly, Randall understood the meaning of this. Which was the greater thing—one's love, or one's conscience?—he asked himself, and then those words came back to him: "My son, may you long keep the strength and vigor and the honest face of youth." The silence grew deeper. A canary-bird in its cage in the dining-room began to sing. Susy Bates was coming with a lighted lamp. Randall arose and took the lamp from her hand and put it on the center-table. Mrs. Bates went to her aunt's side and shook her finger in the latter's face, saying:

"Aunty, you are a selfish woman. The idea of your standing in the way of a real love match! I never heard of such foolishness in all my life. You are the one to yield."

"I do not think so," was Elizabeth Thorn's firm reply.

"If this boy was willing to give up his honor he wouldn't be worth having, anyway," Susy Bates added. "I can tell you he will never do it."

"Ah, but what you call his honor is nothing in the world but a lot of mistaken prejudice," said Mrs. Thorn, speaking with some animation as she arose from her chair. "I think that I know what is best for them. They are very young. Their ardor may pass away soon. Let them wait. It isn't necessary for them to be engaged."

"It isn't necessary!" Susy Bates repeated. "Good land, aunty! How foolish! If I couldn't have been engaged to Stephen Bates—if I couldn't have seen him every day or two, I would have blown up. You don't seem to know what real love is."

"Oh, yes. I have not forgotten the passion of youth, and I know how it changes. They had better not be engaged. All these differences between the North and the South may be settled. If so, I shall be glad to see them engaged."

"Meanwhile you have got Nancy hidden away," Susy Bates went on. "I couldn't do a thing so cruel, aunty. I wouldn't be able to sleep nights. Honest! I wouldn't. But I'll bet the young people will be cunning enough to outwit you."

"If Mr. Hope has any honor worth having he will not try to see my daughter without my consent."

"Oh, aunty! That kind of old nonsense was all right in the Waverley novels, but it's out of date," Susy answered. "Tyranny has gone by. Here in the West we don't believe in the tyranny of parents even."

"I have no sympathy with you modern young people," Mrs. Thorn declared. "What would your father have said to such nonsense as you are talking? I stick to the old ideas of decency and propriety. There is some respect due to a parent who has brought you into the world and tenderly cared for you and who has learned wisdom from experience."

"But the young have their rights," Susy Bates insisted. "I don't think that any one has a right to come between a boy and a girl if they're really in love and worthy of each other. Gosh! I think that's the time for old folks, if they've got any sense, to keep out of the way. It's like standing on the railroad track when the express is coming. And, speaking of prejudice, my dear, I think you've got as much of it as any one I know."

Mrs. Thorn did not answer her niece. She went to the young man and gave him her hand.

"Randall," she said in a kindly tone, "you are a gentleman. I respect you. I am truly sorry that we have not been able to agree."

It was evident that she wished the interview to end. The boy was in the depths. He knew not what to say.

"I shall hope that you will change your mind," he stammered, and then he said good night and went to the door with his hat in his hand.

Susy Bates went outside the door with him.

"The old hen!" she exclaimed. "Don't you worry. We shall keep pecking at her until she gives up. Her life will not be worth living. She can not frighten me with her grand airs. Keep up your courage. I'm going to see the end of this love story or die in the attempt."

Randall went to the office and worked until midnight. He felt no need of food. On his way to his lodgings he found Teaser waiting for him in his uncle's dooryard, as usual. The boy needed the sleep due him, but it came not. He had had a long pull of strenuous effort. He was ill in the morning with chills and fever, and reported to Stephen Bates over their private wire that he did not feel equal to his task that day. Stephen and Susy Bates came over to his room, bringing a tray of food with them, but the boy would not eat. The young woman began to scold him.

"I know what's the matter," she said. "You're worrying about Nancy. If you don't stop it you'll get spanked. Don't you know that this is no way to treat her? If you're going to win Nancy you've got to keep well. It's like winning a ball game. Stephen, you go down-stairs and tell Mrs. Brown to come up, or somebody—so I can stay here without losing my reputation. Then take that dog over to Mr. Hope's house and go and bring Doctor Robertson."

"I do not need a doctor," Randall interposed.

"You are not going to be asked," Susy answered in a decisive tone.

She put an extra blanket over him, lifted the windows and began to sweep the room.

"It would be a nice end of our love story if you were to die off, wouldn't it?" she went on, as she emptied her dust-pan in the stove. "No man has got sense enough to take care of himself. He's got to have a mother or a wife to look after him, or there's no telling what will happen. Gosh! You men are like so many babies."

Randall laughed and she, standing with sleeves rolled, in the center of the room, laughed back at him.

"I guess you're better," she said.

"I do feel better," he answered. "Your talk and your cheerful face are as good as medicine."

Mrs. Brown came up-stairs and in a few minutes Uncle Josiah arrived, bringing a bottle of Doctor Struther's Indian Colligog, and a volume of the poetry of Martin Farquhar Tupper.

He greeted Mrs. Bates with dignity, but as if she were not an important item in the situation. He stepped to the bedside and looked down at his nephew. An ivory headed cane was in his right hand, the book in his left. Uncle Josiah was a glowing figure in fresh laundered linen.

"Sick?" he asked.

"Chills and fever."

"This will fix you. A teaspoonful three times a day," said Uncle Josiah, as he took the bottle of Colligog from his pocket and set it on the table. "I brought this volume of poems. Thought they might interest you while you were convalescing."

He opened the volume and read the lines about man beginning:

"A beaded bubble on the rim of the cup of immortality."

"Beautiful! Isn't it?" said Uncle Josiah, as he put the book on the table in the manner of one conferring an important favor. "Sorry, but I have to go to keep an appointment. The president of the Allegheny Oil Company is in town. Good-by; your aunt will be over to do what she can for you."

He left. Susy Bates slumped into a chair and covered her face with her apron and began to shake with suppressed laughter. Randall laughed also. As soon as the man had got beyond ear-shot Susy lifted both her hands and gave vent to her emotion in a joyous cry that was half-way between merriment and indignation.

"Gosh!" she exclaimed in the midst of her laughter. "Isn't that man 'a beaded bubble on the rim of the cup of immortality'? Isn't he a dream?"

Her voice broke into loud laughter.

"If that man were my husband I'd keep a baseball bat in the house and I'd hit a home run every day," she went on. "He'd be lost under a straw stack. I don't care if he is your uncle, he is the durndest humbug of a man in the United States. He never did a day's work in his life! 'Your aunt will be over to do what she can for you!' Isn't that like him? Haven't you ever laughed to see him sitting in royal robes on that shabby, little, tumble-down throne of his?"

"Uncle Josiah is peculiar," Randall answered.

"Peculiar! He's lazy—that's what's the matter with him. He's a beaded bubble. He's a king with a lot of hard working, ill-clad, half-fed slaves around him. Now I've got that off my mind, and I feel better."

"Well, he's made me forget my headache for a few minutes, anyway," said Randall.

The doctor came and looked at the patient's tongue and felt his pulse and left some medicine and the assurance that it was not a serious matter. Mrs. Hope arrived with her knitting work, and Susy Bates and Mrs. Brown left Aunt Thankful and her nephew together.

Under the tender and intelligent ministry of that good woman the boy fell asleep and did not awake until Susy Bates came at two o'clock with a tray of food for nurse and patient. Randall refused the dainty dishes which had been prepared for him and went to sleep again.

When he awoke a lamp was burning dimly on the table. He lifted his head and looked about the room. A dark-clad figure sat beside the table reading a book. It was Abraham Lincoln. The boy's eyes filled as he looked at him. Mr. Lincoln arose and stepped to the bedside.

"My son, is there anything I can do?" he said in a gentle voice. "I am a good nurse. I have often watched with the sick."

"Mr. Lincoln!" the boy exclaimed. "How do you happen to be here?"

"Mr. Bates told me you were sick. I stopped to ask about you on my way home from the capitol. Your friend, Mr. Ebenezer Hicks, was here. He wanted to go over to his house to see his wife for a moment and get a bite of food. I told him that I would stay until he returned."

"What time is it?"

Mr. Lincoln looked at his watch. "It is nearly eleven," he answered.

"I have slept a long time. I feel better."

Mr. Hicks returned.

"Talk about Lincoln and Hamlin!" he exclaimed. "My ticket is Pork and Beans. I vote for it once a day."

"It's a popular ticket," said the president-elect.

"This is Abraham Lincoln," said Randall.

"What?" Hicks said in a voice between exclamation and inquiry.

Randall repeated his words while the astonished man gazed at the towering, dark-clad figure of the president-elect. Sadly and silently Hicks walked to the fireplace and picked up the poker.

"Say, if you don't mind doin' me a favor, just take this an' hit me solid where ye see that bald spot. It'll make me feel better," said Hicks in a sad tone.

Mr. Lincoln laughed. That moment his friendly interest in Ebenezer Hicks began.

"I orto have knowed ye," Hicks continued. "I've looked at yer pictur' a thousan' times, I guess."

"It's a comfort to think that you didn't know me," said Mr. Lincoln with a smile. "I've been looked at and pursued and cheered and cursed and described until it seems like a compliment not to be recognized."

He went to the bedside and took Randall's hand, saying, "My son, don't let disappointment get the better of you. Take life a little easier. There was a friend of mine who had a high-bred horse. He used to say that if that horse only knew how to go slow he'd have saved his value in smashed buggies. It's a good idea for a man to have a brake on his wagon and to use it on the down grades. Take care of yourself. I may want you to go to Washington with me. Good night, my son."

Mr. Lincoln left them. Randall sat up in bed.

"Did you hear what he said?" he asked in a tone of gratified surprise.

"I heard it—you bet I heard it," Hicks answered. "That man likes you—sure as preachin'."

"I wonder what he's got in his mind."

"If you set up there till you've ciphered that out you'll git the brain fever," said Mr. Hicks. "Lay down an' cover yerself up. You might as well try to roll the world over to see what's under it."

"He's a new kind of a man," Randall declared. "A rail-splitter, a big, bony, hard-working, homely man—just like a thousand others you'd see in a crowd—only he knows everything that is worth knowing, I guess. Those other big fellows are so pompous and conceited, but they look very little beside him. He's a new kind of man."

"Well, ye see, we have got newfangled washin' machines an' patent churns an' plows, an' harrers an' steam hosses, an' why shouldn't there be a new, improved kind o' a man. It looks as if God had invented one, an' I guess he's goin' to beat the world."

Randall looked at Hicks with a smile of amusement.

"How do you happen to be here?" Randall asked.

"They tol' me you was sick at the Magnetic Telegrapht Office, an' where to come. I told yer aunt I'd spend the night with ye an' bym by he come an' said he was a friend o' yourn an' I asked if he'd stay a few minutes till I run home an' by thunder! he said he would. I didn't know him from a side o' sole leather."

"I'm all right now. You can go home as well as not," Randall urged.

"No, sir, I promised, an' I'm a goin' to stay right where I be. I can keep a slow fire an' sleep here in this chair. It's as comf't'able as a feather bed. If you want anything, holler."

Hicks stirred the fire, put on a log, gave the boy his medicine, and sat down in the cushioned easy chair.

"It's nigh twelve o'clock," he yawned. "You better roll over an' go to sleep."

"He calls me his son, and I think of him as my father," the boy said to himself as he closed his eyes.

In the silence that followed he fell asleep and saw again in his dreams the murder of Cæsar in the Roman Forum.

CHAPTER XIII

SOME ELECTRICAL ADVENTURES AND A HISTORIC LEAVE TAKING

Two days later Randall was at work again with an added respect for human nature and a new sense of the value of friends. Mrs. Hicks appeared at the telegraph office in the afternoon of that day on which he had resumed his duties. She called for Mr. Hope. She would not confide her business to the lady who checked the messages and collected for their transmission. Randall came to see her.

"I never sent a telegraft before," she said, "I don't know how to do it. You'll have to show me. I know you'll do it honest an' careful. How much will it be?"

"What do you want to say?" he asked.

"I want to say that we got here safe an' sound an' have hired a farm from Mrs. Elijah Thorn that we met on the way. Please write all the news an' send two hundred dollars to Springfield, Illinois. Put on a P. S. an' say nothin' new yit 'bout the young couple."

"Have you seen Mrs. Thorn since you came here?"

"She was out to our house yesterday."

"Did she tell you where Nancy is?"

"No, she didn't tell, but I guess I can find out."

"You find out, if you can. She will not tell me."

Mrs. Hicks answered: "That's mean. You leave it to me, an' Eb. I'd give my shoes to see you married safe an' sound. You telegraft what I said, will ye? Send it just as careful as ye can. How much will it cost?"

"First let me write it for you. 'Arrived safely.' That's enough about that. 'Hired Mrs. Thorn's farm. Send news and two hundred dollars to Springfield, Illinois.' That's all you want to say, isn't it?"

"You ain't said a word 'bout the young couple. I've got a letter from her an' she says she can't sleep nights till she hears 'bout 'em."

"All right, we'll say, 'No marriage yet,' she'll understand that."

"'But soon will be.' Put that on just to please her. How much will it cost?"

"The rate will be one dollar and sixty-eight cents."

"Couldn't you make it any less?"

Randall smiled. To Mrs. Hicks, sending a telegram was like buying calico.

"I will send this message, and it shall not cost you a penny," he answered.

"I wouldn't mind payin' a dollar—not if I knew it would go real quick."

"It shall not cost you a penny, and it will probably be delivered inside of two hours."

"Two hours! My soul an' body!" she exclaimed.

"I guess it'll be purty badly out o' breath. I'm goin' to set down an' stay right here till I know it has got there safe. I don't want nothin' to happen to it on the way."

Randall explained that telegrams did not have to be watched while they were traveling; that she could go home and be sure that her message would do no loafing on the way.

"I'm doin' a lot o' sewin' for Nancy this week," she whispered. "An' I'm a goin' to find out. Send it careful."

She stood watching while he went to his key and sent the message on its way. In a moment he informed her that it had got to Pittsburgh, and would soon be in New York. Then she reluctantly left the office.

That evening about eleven o'clock, as Randall sat at his desk, his call sounded on a little used and newly installed line, covering a number of growing but small communities in northern Illinois. In the Springfield Office it was known as the "Pumpkinville Line." Its operators were inexperienced boys and girls who were often reprimanded for visiting on the wire which was idle in the night. How they had tried his patience as their messages came stumbling into the sounder, sundry words and phrases having to be often repeated! That inexpert, wabbly "S. F." that shook the bar was like the first steps of a child learning to walk, and there was no signature. Which one of the Pumpkinville babies was out of bed at that time of night?

"S. F. Who is it?" he snapped back.

"A friend of yours," the answer came swiftly, clearly and firmly, with no time wasted for tape reading. This was not a Pumpkinville hand. It was an expert operator.

"What friend?" he asked.

"Nancy Thorn," came the answer.

"Where are you?"

"I am forbidden to tell you. I am just a voice in the night, but I want you to know that I haven't forgotten you. Every day I am thinking of that ride to the picnic grove and of your words when we parted in Ohio, and of our little witch dwarf."

"It must be Nancy," he said to himself.

"And you are an operator?" he clicked.

"When I heard that you were learning telegraphy I began to study it. My mother asked me to promise not to see you or write you a letter without her consent until I was a year older. I agreed if she would make it six months. She did. We haven't long to wait. I had to find some way to talk to you, and I have. I know it's a little dishonest, but I guess the Lord will forgive us."

"It doesn't trouble my conscience a bit, and it has taken a load off my mind," Randall answered. "This talk is better than none, but I hate to have a lot of cold wire between you and me, with birds roosting on it. I want to see you."

"But you wouldn't want me to break my word.

Mother said that she was going to have a talk with you. She would like you to give up being an abolitionist and go and live in the South. I told her that you wouldn't do it."

"You wouldn't like me if I did," was his answer.

"I'd like you anyhow."

"But I wouldn't like myself."

This electrical dialogue had been interrupted three times by business on the main line, and then resumed. Now it was finally broken off by long press despatches, one of which spoke of increasing bitterness, north and south, and conveyed a hint that the life of the president-elect should be guarded. A sense of apprehension and a thought of half-forgotten things came to the boy's mind as these words rushed into the sounder. Would there be a war?

There were numerous night talks over the Pumpkinville wire after that. They led to a result natural but unexpected even by the talkers.

Mrs. Thorn had built a house on her farm half a mile from the city and furnished it and moved in with Ebenezer Hicks as superintendent and his wife as housekeeper. Within a week Mrs. Hicks had discovered the address of Nancy and reported it to Randall. Mr. Lincoln was soon taking the boy to Washington to be one of the government telegraphers.

What would become of Nancy, with the possibility of war looming up in his vision?

The hot blood of youth could restrain itself no longer. A letter proposed the details of an elopement. In their next talk Nancy agreed to them.

Naturally they spoke in guarded terms over the wire. Her most intimate friend was Ruth Stacy—a niece of the principal of the seminary, and the telegraph operator in its village. Nancy spent the nights in Ruth's home, opposite the campus, as the school was crowded. This hint was enough for Randall.

The school was seventy miles from Springfield, and remote from the railroad. Two days later Randall set out on Tyke's back. He was accompanied by a boy riding a good horse for Nancy's use. They spent the night at a farm-house near their destination, and rode into the village next morning and put up at a small tavern. Randall found Ruth Stacy at the telegraph office. He learned to his dismay that Mrs. Thorn had arrived there in a carriage with two gentlemen and had taken Nancy out for a little ride, and had not yet returned. Mrs. Thorn had said that they would be driving back in time for dinner. Miss Stacy could not imagine what was detaining them.

The young man was not so incapable. He thought that he knew what had happened. He and Nancy had been betrayed. Mrs. Thorn had taken her away and, perhaps, very far away and was keeping her. They would never return. He had been foolish to talk to Nancy as he had done, on a wire more or less public. Their conversation had clicked on a dozen registers and some one may have been reeling the tape through and reading every word of those tender dialogues and reporting them to others. The girl did not know what road they had taken, so he could not follow them. He could only wait with the dim hope that his suspicion was unfounded. He spent a wretched day and a half in the village and set out at night for Springfield with a sense of defeat which was like a sliver in his flesh.

He reached the house of Stephen Bates at supper time next day. Stephen and Susy were at the table together. He sat down with them.

"You look like a dog that has been poisoned," Stephen remarked. "What has happened to you?"

"I've been trying to get married," the boy answered.

"Trying to get married!" Susie exclaimed with a smile lighted by glowing eyes. "Gosh, Steve! Think of a boy like that trying his best to get married. There is a subject for the Springfield Ladies' Symposium."

She laughed a little, shook her blonde head, covered her face with both hands and exclaimed in a tone of distress, "Oh! Oh!"

Randall went on: "I guess it's an impossible job for a boy like me. I rode out to the young ladies' seminary where Nancy was. Her mother got there before I did. That's the trouble. She has taken Nancy away. Two men were with Mrs. Thorn. They were going to take Nancy for a little ride, and the ride hasn't ended yet. They kidnapped her."

"What an old devil she is!" exclaimed Susy Bates.

She arose from the table and took a daguerreotype portrait of her aunt from the mantel on which it rested and threw it into the fire.

"That's what I think of her," she added.

Things in general were going in a bad way. Depressing news had come from the South. The Gulf States had seceded. A southern confederacy had been formed. Lincoln had a solemn look in his face as he went about the city.

"I don't believe that I shall go to Washington," said Randall.

"What, are you going to secede too?" Stephen Bates asked. "Of course you'll go, and Susy and I are going, as soon as I can train a man to take my place."

"I'm worried about Nancy," Randall answered. "I fear that I may lose track of her."

"All these differences between North and South will be settled," Stephen declared with cheerful optimism. "The glacier will melt away. We are going to be a reunited people."

That, indeed, was the opinion of most good citizens, Randall reflected, and he went to his lodgings and to bed, in a happier frame of mind.

The day before the presidential train was leaving for Washington a letter came from Felix O'Dowd in the familiar script of his wife. They had been detained in Chicago by business, and had had to deny themselves the pleasure of another visit to Springfield. But he had good news to tell. Nancy had come to their house that afternoon with a young lady friend.

"I felt the grace and power and beauty o' the colleen," his letter said. "Ah, me brave lad, she is like the fabled one 'who launched a thousand ships and tumbled down the topless towers of Ilium,' and she bade me tell you to keep your faith in her and be patient, lad. They will be going to-morrow, whither she knows not. She will let us hear where she will be stopping and their future doings. She has told us what is in the wind. Don't let us be wondering where you are at any time, my sweet lad, for it is in the heart o' the little witch to have me guide you in this matter o' winning the fair colleen, and any day I may have news for you."

Again the bounding pulse of youth was urging him to rash deeds. He wished to go at once to Cincinnati in quest of her and to consult with Felix.

The letter had arrived at an early hour in the morning. Without stopping to eat, he had proceeded to the hotel where the Lincolns were spending their last days in Springfield.

The president-elect was eating breakfast alone in his room. His face wore a look of sadness, which Randall had not observed before. Yet the great man smiled and with a playful word invited the boy to eat with him. Randall, suddenly aware of his hunger, sat down with his distinguished friend.

"Personal matters lead me to ask you if I may be excused from going to Washington, just now," said the young man.

A small Bible lay beside Mr. Lincoln's plate. He had been reading in it as he waited for his food.

"I would rather like to be excused myself," the great man answered, turning a sad and weary face toward the boy. "But the thought has come to me that I am going to serve a great Master, and no man can turn back in that service, once he has put his hand to the plow."

He opened the Bible and read these words aloud:

"For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

"And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

Mr. Lincoln closed the Book. A moment of silence followed. Not before had such a thought of the nature of the business in which he was to be employed, come to the young man.

Did the great man know of the bitter trial which had come to him, and of his temptation? It was the gossip of the town that Mrs. Lincoln was not in sympathy with all the political ideals of her husband. Perhaps that was why he had found courage in the words:

"And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

After all, were not his own troubles very small compared with those of this new, gentle, beloved father of his? "Mr. Lincoln, I shall go with you to-morrow," he said. "Not until now have I known how great is the honor you have offered me."

It was the beginning of Mr. Lincoln's last day in Springfield—Sunday the tenth of February.

"I have never seen a sadder face than was his. He was in the deep waters," Randall has written.

Mrs. Lincoln had been packing for days and was worn out and resting.

"My son, you look weary. Do you not sleep well?" Mr. Lincoln asked.

"On my way west I saw the play of *Julius Cæsar*, and since then I am often awakened by a dream of its tragedy," Randall answered. "Last night I again saw the slaying of Cæsar."

Mr. Lincoln turned and looked at the boy.

"Strange!" he exclaimed. "I, too, have troubled dreams. Sometimes I see a great ship driven in darkness toward a dim shore. I have looked into the mirror and seen two faces, one living and the other dead. I fear that I have in me a drop or two of the superstition of my fathers. They lived in the wilderness, and had dream books, and believed in signs and portents."

"I do not," said Randall.

As they arose from the table, Mr. Lincoln looked at him and smiled, thinking, no doubt, of his youth and the background of inexperience behind that assertion.

"My son, I would know that you were a Yankee," he remarked. "The Yankees have common sense and they never let go of it."

They parted, and each went his way. Randall to buy a trunk and pack his goods and settle his affairs at the office, and bid his friends good-by.

Tyke was to be left with Ebenezer Hicks on Mrs. Thorn's farm for Nancy to ride, as the girl would probably come to her mother's home when Randall was out of the way. The young man went to the Hicks farm with his dog and mare. Mrs. Thorn had left there with team and driver and surrey. They knew not where she was going or when she would return.

"She don't write to me—nary a word," said Mrs. Hicks. "I guess she knows I ain't to be trusted."

"An', by gosh! She's right," her husband remarked. "When you're makin' a match you ain't no more right to be trusted than a scared hoss. If these wimmen had their way there wouldn't be a single man in the world. They'd round 'em up an' rope an' brand 'em like they do the cattle out here."

He found Uncle Josiah sitting comfortably by the fire reading the poems of the immortal Martin Farquhar Tupper. Aunt Thankful was at work in the kitchen.

"Randall, if you want to get rich I can tell you how to do it," said Uncle Josiah. "Oil—oil is the thing!"

"Uncle, I don't want oil to make me rich," Randall answered, "I want the fun of earning my own riches, if I ever have any. If I don't, I'll enjoy my task and my friends anyhow."

Aunt Thankful came out of the kitchen and kissed him.

"I call that good sense," said she.

"You lack ambition," Uncle Josiah rejoined with a sweep of his hand, indicating that they were both in the same shabby little boat.

"Perhaps I do," Randall answered, "but I have thought that out. Uncle, I have decided that there are things better than money."

"If you haven't money, boy, you don't amount to much," Uncle Josiah declared, as he arose from his chair with a look of profound conviction. With him the ideals of the poets were but sounding brass after all.

"How about Abraham Lincoln?" the boy asked.

"He has brains," said Uncle Josiah, with a touch of sternness. He added as he got his overcoat, "I must go down-town on a matter of business. We shall see you off to-morrow."

When he had gone, Randall said to his aunt:

"I fear, aunt, that you have hard times, now and then, with Uncle Josiah and the children on your hands."

The woman sank into a chair and covered her face with her apron and was near breaking down. In a moment she said that their rent was three months overdue, and that the boy Joshua was not yet earning enough to help much.

"I'm going to leave some money with you," he said. "I'll do what I can to help when you are in trouble, if you'll let me know about it."

The young man gave her all the money he could spare and left the house of his uncle and, as he was leaving, he saw Mrs. Lincoln's carriage at the door.

"Mr. Hope," she said, "if your aunt is in would you ask her to step out a moment?"

He brought his aunt to the carriage side and went away. That evening he spent with Susy and Stephen Bates.

Next morning Mr. and Mrs. Hicks called for Randall and drove him to the depot in a cold rain. A large crowd had gathered, and was standing under umbrellas. The train was waiting. Near it was Uncle Josiah and Aunt Thankful and the children, Stephen and Susy Bates, and sundry other friends of his.

A few final words of parting, and he went aboard to find his quarters in the grand "new sleeping-car" provided for the president-elect and his family. It was magnificent with shining brass lamps and varnished panels of mahogany and a glowing sideboard. It was filled with a genial warmth proceeding from a coal heater enclosed by a grate of brass in a corner. Certain western members of the new government, whom Randall recognized, were in their seats.

A loud cheering outside announced the arrival of

Mr. Lincoln and his family. The young man hurried to the rear platform of the last car which overlooked the crowd. The mayor, William H. Herndon, and other leading citizens, were there.

In a few minutes the president-elect, in silk hat and top-coat joined them. The rain had stopped. The crowd now filled the open spaces. All were cheering and waving handkerchiefs. Then arose many calls for that familiar and beloved voice.

Every tongue was hushed when Mr. Lincoln moved to the railing of the platform. He looked down at his friends and was silent. It would seem, for a little, that he was feeling for the hand of God to lead and support him; that he had come to one of those deep moments in his life when the gift of prophecy descended upon him. "His heart was moved and the heart of his people as the trees of the wood are moved by wind."

Suddenly, out of the depths of his spirit came that fatherly voice, fluttering a little before it began its flight, like the dove leaving the ark. A few words of tender affection and then the flight: "Here I have lived for a quarter of a century and have grown from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born. I now leave not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail.

Trusting in Him who can go with me and remain with you and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

In a moment the train was on its way toward the beginning of a new age in history.

CHAPTER XIV

NEW REVELATIONS, NEW FRIENDS AND NEW ENEMIES

RANDALL was looking out of the car window when Mrs. Lincoln came and sat down beside him. She was a dignified woman, of a full figure a little under medium height, fashionably dressed, with blue-gray eyes and a kindly countenance. Her face was florid and her firm chin and mouth suggested strong character. Her brown hair had streaks of white in it.

"I have heard good things of you," she began with a genial smile. "Nothing that I have heard has pleased me so much as what came out in my little talk with your aunt yesterday. I told Mr. Lincoln and it pleased him very much. Your aunt is in sore need of a friend, and it has relieved us to learn that you are going to help her."

"It has pleased me to learn that you have been a good friend of hers," Randall answered. "I am her nephew and it is natural that I should be her friend."

"I have met Nancy Thorn and her mother," Mrs. Lincoln went on. "Of course we have all heard of Nancy. Your rival is a distant relative of mine from Baltimore. His mother writes to me now and then. She forgets no romantic detail in the family history."

"I did not know that I had a rival," Randall answered.

"You wouldn't expect to win a girl like Nancy without a rival," Mrs. Lincoln went on. "They met in Cincinnati. I warn you that he is a delightful boy. His mother has invited them to Baltimore."

"What is his name?" Randall asked.

"Andrew Porter—a descendant of the famous general of that name. I thought surely you would have heard of him. If it is news, I have done you a favor for you ought to know. Do you not hear from Nancy?"

"No," the boy answered sadly. "Her mother is against me. She is a southern lady. She thinks that my convictions are wrong. She wishes me to give them up, and I can not make myself over to please her. That is impossible. She has kept Nancy and me apart."

"It is the old trouble. They call it the 'irreconcilable conflict.' Let us hope that it is not so—that it will pass away. Be of good cheer. Remember that these love-affairs of young people are never quite so important as they seem to be. I am going to write to Mrs. Thorn and say something very nice about you."

The good lady left him and joined Mr. Lincoln, who was talking with two Illinois statesmen. The young man sat looking out of the car window and for the first time the thought came to him that life, after all, was a very trying business, and hardly worth the trouble it made. The sun had come out and the train was moving through a wide, open prairie. They passed a small station surrounded by cheering crowds. He was in the midst of great scenes.

It was a wonderful experience to be speeding over the earth in a beautiful house on a thousand-mile journey. He had never been on the cars before save once when he had ridden from Potsdam Junction to Ogdensburg, and when they had hit a milk wagon at the Madrid crossing no great damage was done. He had never forgotten how the driver had got up drenched with milk and gasped and roared and cursed "at the damn new contraptions in the world." Randall had been so scared by the clatter and speed of the train that he had returned by stage.

He was going to Washington, the capital of the United States, to have a part in the making of history. Slowly the attrition of these thoughts wore away the sharpness of his anxiety.

The train had reached Indianapolis where Mr. Lincoln, having been addressed by Governor Oliver P. Morton, spoke to a vast and enthusiastic audience, from the balcony of the Bates House. At the station a telegram from Felix O'Dowd was delivered to Randall. It said:

Nancy and her mother are in Baltimore. See Miss Désirée Fontane at the Carrollton Hotel in that city.

The newspapers of the Hoosier City were full of disturbing information. Delegates from the seceded states had met in Montgomery, Alabama, and organized "The Confederate States of America" and had elected a president and vice-president and were that day drafting a constitution. Baltimore was in a ferment of excitement. It was said that a disloyal mob would try to prevent the president-elect from passing through that city.

Two men had promptly boarded the presidential car on its arrival, one of whom was Randall's friend, Fritz Roemer. The other was a rugged, stern-faced, bearded man. These two and Mr. Ward Lamon, who had come from Springfield, escorted the president to the carriage which conveyed him through the crowd to the hotel.

Randall overheard a member of the train crew saying, "Pinkerton and one of his men." The boy knew what that meant. Who had not heard of the Pinkertons? The two returned with Mr. Lincoln and his friend Lamon and were aboard the train from Indianapolis to Columbus. Roemer introduced Randall to Mr. Allen Pinkerton as a "four-in-one kind of chap who ought to be on our force." Pinkerton—a reticent man—made no answer. Later, having heard from Fritz of the young man's strength and courage, he came to Randall and said:

"My boy, if you want a job, I can use you."

"I am a telegraph operator, and I am going to stick to Mr. Lincoln," Randall answered.

"Perhaps you could serve him best for a while in my employ," said Mr. Pinkerton. "He has consented to let you go to Baltimore with Fritz on a train that pulls out of Columbus soon after we arrive. Baltimore is the gate to the capital. A lot of fire-eaters have gathered there. We want to know just what those rough chaps have got in their minds. I would want you to forget that you had any connection with us. I would want you to go about like any other citizen. What I need is an honest, unprejudiced, fair-minded observer. I don't want our men to know you or you to know them unless it should be necessary. Fritz is unknown there even to Pinkerton men. He will tell you what to do and how to go about it. Every day you will report your impressions to some individual in New York whose name he will give you. Personally I do not think that we shall have any violence to contend with. If I am wrong you may have to help in the strong-arm work."

"I would like to go to Baltimore, for I have a little business of my own there," Randall answered. "Besides, idleness doesn't agree with me, and if I can do anything to help make this a safe journey I'd like to do it."

So it happened that Randall and his friend Roemer left the presidential party at Columbus and set out for Baltimore, arriving there in the evening of the fourteenth of February.

"Let's go to the Carrollton House," Randall proposed, that being the hotel mentioned in the telegram of Felix.

"That's where I want to go," Fritz answered. "I know it as well as I know my own house."

They took a cab to the Carrollton where they engaged a double room. Fritz had a small leather trunk with him which he had carried on his shoulder to the cab and delivered to the porter at the hotel door. When it was set down in their room Fritz opened it and took out an interesting variety of garments—a swallowtail suit of the fashionable cut and material, with fresh linen, and two outfits of much worn, threadbare clothing with coarse boots and flannel shirts.

"I am equipped for champagne or beer," he said. "It will be beer to-night. I'm going to put on these old duds and slip out of a side door and go to a cheap saloon and order some beer and frankfurters and make a friend or two if I can. You put on your best clothes and take champagne and terrapin with that sweetheart of yours, if you can find her. We'll see what's going on at both ends of the world."

"But my trunk hasn't come," said Randall.

"I think that this Dan'l Webster suit of mine will fit you," said Fritz. "Try it on."

It did fit perfectly, as the two agreed, and soon they were washed and dressed and ready for the adventures of that night. Fritz went away, leaving Randall before the mirror fussing with his necktie. The latter had come to another critical point in his history, and every moment his thoughts were challenging his plans. He felt that he must look his best even to meet one who was a friend of Nancy.

He went to the office and inquired for Miss Désirée Fontane and soon learned that the young lady was with her mother in the dining-room. He wrote his name on a card and sent it to her. Soon a charming girl, of about Nancy's age, came out to greet him. In her delightful southern accent she gave him a hearty welcome and invited him to join her and her mother at dinner. It turned out that they were from Charleston, South Carolina, and that Mrs. Fontane—a dark-eyed handsome widow of some forty years, of unusual cheerfulness and animation—was a cousin of Mrs. Thorn. The ladies were in evening dress and jewels.

"You must hurry and order your dinner," said the latter. "I can give you only twenty minutes for refreshments, as you must go with us to the theater to hear Mr. Booth at ten minutes of eight. He is to play Raphael in *The Marble Heart.* Bring him oysters and terrapin and chicken and ice-cream," she added, turning to the waiter, "and bring it quickly, please."

"Mama, he may not care for a one of those things," said Miss Désirée. "Let him speak for himself."

The girl had an erect and shapely figure. Her head was beautifully poised. It was crowned with a mass of dark hair wound in braids like a coronet adorned with black velvet and diamonds. Her features were as delicately molded as Nancy's, but her color was darker, her expression more serious, her form a bit fuller.

"My dear, I know men," said Mrs. Fontane, with a merry look in her large dark eyes. "There are times when they like to have their thinking done for them."

"And you are an able and exact thinker," said Randall.

"I have heard of your chivalry, and I knew what to expect—a man of real discernment," Mrs. Fontane continued, smiling on the boy, and showing him a set of teeth as white and shapely as her pearls. "Anyhow, I think that you should do what you can to please me. It may surprise you to learn that I am a friend of yours."

"I knew not that such good luck was mine," said Randall. "I will even eat—tripe, if you say so. I have always feared it, but for the sake of such a friendship I can be brave."

"You know, my tripe has been Yankees," Mrs. Fontane laughed. "But you are the best example I have seen. I like you. In this rivalry for Nancy's hand I am a Yankee sympathizer. I know a man when I see him, and you have more manhood in your little finger than Andrew Porter has in his whole body. Your chance may come in a day or two, and if it does you'll have to jump in right smart and grab it."

"I like jumping," Randall answered.

"There is nothing like promptness in a man," she went on. "Nothing like seizing the moment. My husband, the late Mr. Fontane, was never late in his lifetime—never. He was a real man. There was no grass growing under his feet."

"Where is Nancy, and how is she?" the young man asked.

"She and Gustavus Adolphus are with friends here in Baltimore. In the family her mother has been known, ever since I can remember, as Gustavus Adolphus, on account of her firmness and decision and fighting ability. Nobody could prevent her from marrying Elijah Thorn—not even Mr. Thorn himself, who disagreed with her and her father on every possible subject. She adored the man and was happy with him, and he has left her a fortune; but it wouldn't do for her daughter to marry a Yankee. Oh, no! She is the only person in the world who has a right to do as she pleases. Nancy is not so happy as she might be. She needs better company. But she is well, and beautiful beyond words."

"I long for a look at her," said the boy.

"Well, I want to be there when you meet," Mrs. Fontane answered. "I am sorry, but you will have to stop eating. It is time for us to go. We will meet you in five minutes at the ladies' entrance."

Randall ran up-stairs for his top-coat, and was waiting at the appointed place when Mrs. Fontane and her daughter came down.

"You remind me a little of Nancy," the young man said to the girl. "I would think that you are, perhaps, a year older?"

"No, we are about of an age."

"I suppose that the plentiful sunlight of the far South has hurried you along a little."

"Everything grows fast in the South." She turned upon him a pair of lustrous dark eyes like her mother's and smiled. Her teeth were as white as alabaster, and so admirably shaped that one always saw them in his memories of Désirée Fontane. Her manners were like her mother's—full of animation—but there was a look of sadness in her eyes which often seemed to be gazing backward in moments of preoccupation.

"We are going to meet Mr. Booth after the play," said Mrs. Fontane, when they were seated in their coach.

"How does it happen that I am so fortunate as to be included?" Randall asked.

"My son, never be surprised when you are with the Fontanes," the lady answered. "It is an old saying in our town that one needs only the help of the Lord and the Fontanes. Mr. Booth is my friend, and, like most of us southerners, he has a capable hospitality."

They were deeply moved by the admirable acting and the golden voice of Booth, now so familiar to Randall. When at the end of the third act the tragedian was called out for a speech he dwelt upon the threatened rights of his beloved South and his fear that another Cæsar would soon be crowned in Washington. This was greeted with murmurs and shouts in the galleries, which was the first expression young Hope had heard from the bitter, lawless and misguided men who were then in Baltimore.

After the play they waited in the manager's room for the great actor.

"Now, after that demonstration in the galleries you know the adjective that goes with Yankee," Mrs. Fontane remarked.

"I should think that Mr. Booth would object to meeting that kind of man," Randall remarked.

She answered: "He knows that the damned Yankees are not the only ones in the world. He has many Yankee friends. You born fighting man! In Baltimore let me be your captain. Don't argue, and don't get angry. You and I have trouble enough."

"Never fear," said the young man. "The time for that has gone by. It is now apparent that we are facing war."

"The South is looking for a sudden attack," the lady went on. "The people are excited. A lot of rough men have assembled here, and if northern soldiers should try to pass I suppose that they will try to stop them."

Mr. Booth entered, followed by two other gentlemen. Randall was dumb with astonishment, for one of the latter was the dark-skinned man with a scar on his right temple whom Randall had seen before, and who was known in Cincinnati as Lewis Thornton Powell. He was now in full evening dress.

Mr. Booth received them graciously and with gentle manners. He was a handsome young man, of medium height, with black wavy hair and large beautiful eyes of the same color. His nose had the delicate, patrician curve and modeling. It would have been difficult to imagine a head more nobly fashioned. He introduced his friend Doctor Mudd, and Powell was presented as Mr. Payne. Randall gave the latter another survey to be sure of his identity. He entertained no doubt of that.

Mr. Booth received their compliments with delightful modesty, saying: "It all seems very little to me, for I see ahead far greater things to be done. My beloved friend! We are going to Guy's to supper. Will you do us the honor to come along and cheer us with your own wit and youth and beauty and that of your charming daughter and her friend?"

"No, no, good sir," Mrs. Fontane answered. "We are so filled with inspiration that there is no room for food. We must hasten to our beds."

"'I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you,'" Mr. Booth quoted from the familiar speech of Shylock.

"To-night *The Marble Heart* is in me. I need not company or bread," she answered.

All spoke their adieux, and Mrs. Fontane and the young people went to their waiting carriage.

"I suppose you didn't go to supper because the doctor was there," Désirée said to her mother.

"My daughter, you have remarkable penetration," Mrs. Fontane answered. Turning to Randall, she whispered: "He is a friend of the Porters. It is unfortunate that he ran into us. I hate him for many reasons."

They got into their carriage and drove in silence to the hotel.

"I hope to have Nancy here for dinner at six-thirty to-morrow evening," the lady said to Randall as they were parting for the night. "It will be quite by chance that you will find us in the ladies' parlor at six-twenty, and then Nancy will introduce you to her friends, Mrs. Fontane and her daughter, Désirée."

"I understand," said Randall.

"Gustavus Adolphus must not know that you are here," Mrs. Fontane went on. "She and Nancy will be coming into town to-morrow morning. You must not be seen on the streets. Keep to your room and come to us ready for the great event. Immediately after dinner we could drive to the house of a rector I know, if it should happen that you both cared to meet him."

A pretty smile accompanied that suggestion.

CHAPTER XV

A CLASH OF WITS BETWEEN TWO ABLE LADIES

RANDALL was writing letters in his room until one o'clock. He was getting ready for bed when Fritz came.

"I must write my report before I turn in," he whispered. "I think that there is a conspiracy to stop Lincoln here. In this town are many who would kill him if they could. It looks as if Baltimore was in the possession of a mob which the authorities will not be able to control."

In his report Randall told what had happened at the theater, and stated that in his opinion one of the most dangerous men in the country was John Wilkes Booth, the distinguished actor.

Next morning they had their breakfast in their room and while they were eating Randall said: "I shall not be working for Pinkerton to-day. It is likely to be the greatest day in my history, and before it ends I may even be married."

He told Fritz of Mrs. Fontane's friendly help and of his prospects.

"Pardon me, but I have got into Mr. Pinkerton's way of thinking," said Fritz. "He always looks for the motive. I wonder why she is so interested in your love-affair. Have you known her before?"

"Never, but I think that I know her motive. I have thought a good deal about it. For a time I couldn't quite make out why she—a true southerner, with no love for Yankees—should be trying to help me against one of her own people. Now I think it is clear to me. There are signs of an old rivalry between her and her cousin, Mrs. Thorn. They have had for each other a kind of polite, half covered bitterness. Mrs. Thorn is eager to make a match between Nancy and young Porter. For some reason Mrs. Fontane is determined to prevent it."

"I think that you would make a good detective," said Fritz, who was putting on his old clothes. "But I am sure that you are only in the edge of this matter."

Randall had other suspicions which he had not thought it proper to express. The notion had come to him that Andrew Porter had jilted Désirée Fontane, and probably in a heartless manner. No doubt Porter was rich and of noble southern blood. He now wished to marry Nancy Thorn. Mrs. Fontane wished to defeat and humble him, and for two reasons. First, her cousin was eager for the marriage. It would be for her in the nature of a triumph to take over the young man who had jilted her niece. Second, Mrs. Fontane was trying to get even.

He spent a lonely, wearisome day in his room with the morning newspaper, a copy of the Bible which lay on the desk, and letter-writing. At a quarter of six he sent out for a handsome bouquet and dressed carefully in his own clothes. At six-twenty he joined Mrs. Fontane and her daughter in the ladies' parlor. They were sitting alone, beautifully gowned.

"Nancy is a little late," said the good lady.

"Would she come alone?" Randall asked.

"She has a maid—an elderly woman—who goes about with her when she wishes to get away from Porter."

Mrs. Fontane surveyed the fine lad with a motherly eye as he stood before her—a proud, erect, magnificent specimen of young manhood.

"You would do to walk down the center aisle of Grace Church with the fair one on your arm," she remarked.

Randall turned toward the girl, and said laughingly, "Miss Désirée, your mother is fond of jesting. I wish that I had the gift for it, but God made me a solemn man. I try to conceal the fact, but I feel like the melancholy Dane when I am dressed up."

"I know all about Randall Hope of Hopkinton," Mrs. Fontane answered with a smile.

"Oh, yes, I am what I am—the son of a poor man, and happiest in the woods with a gun on my shoulder, but, after all, I like wit and fine clothes and fair ladies."

"And you have a delightful way of getting along with them," said the fair lady who stood before him. "There must have been grand gentlemen back in your family somewhere."

"But so far back that no one ever saw them to my knowledge. One thing I have always had, and that is good luck, which has even given me your friendship. I value it, and thank you for it."

Randall was interrupted by the arrival of a bell boy. The latter said that a lady had come to see Mrs. Fontane and her daughter.

"Please bring her here," the latter answered.

"I suppose that I had better leave you for a few minutes," said Randall.

"No, stay where you are, and take your cue from me," Mrs. Fontane commanded.

Astonishment fell upon the little group in the ladies' parlor when, in a moment, they saw coming—not Nancy, but Mrs. Thorn—the smiling Gustavus Adolphus of their playful talk. A half smothered "My God!" rose to the lips of Mrs. Fontane.

"Dear Cousin Adele!" the newcomer exclaimed in a sweet tone and with a smile of undying affection. "Nancy is so very sorry that she could not join your little party this evening. I didn't want to keep you waiting, and so I came to tell you."

"Thank you, dear Lizzie!" Mrs. Fontane exclaimed in the gentlest manner and with a fond smile and a self-restraint which Randall often recalled, and never without some expression of awe and wonder. "How fortunate, although I hope the dear child is not ill! Mr. Hope arrived quite unexpectedly and with letters of introduction. There was not time to inform you of his coming."

"Mr. Hope! Yes, indeed! What a surprise!" were the exclamations which broke from the lips of Mrs. Thorn as she gave her hand to the young man. "How well you look! What a color you have!"

There was a fine note of irony in this, but one might have thought that Mrs. Fontane was quite unaware of it.

"Won't you come to dinner with us?" the latter asked.

"Impossible! Thanks!" Mrs. Thorn answered. "I am dining with young Mr. Porter. He is very lonely. His mother left this afternoon and Nancy went with her. Andrew and I will follow them to-morrow. Good night!"

Randall turned to Mrs. Fontane and said: "If you will excuse me a moment I will escort Mrs. Thorn to her carriage."

Mrs. Thorn answered for her cousin: "Thank you, but I need not give you the trouble; young Mr. Porter is waiting below stairs."

"At least let me take you to him," Randall insisted. "I have not yet met Mr. Porter."

"Surely, I shall be glad to introduce you to a real southern boy of the old stock."

"You will find us in the dining-room," Mrs. Fontane said to Randall as he went away with the clever woman who had somehow defeated their purpose.

They found Mr. Porter waiting in the hall which led to the ladies' entrance. He was a tall, slim, handsome youth with dark hair and eyes and regular features. His hair was straight and a bit rebellious. The boys shook hands and smiled upon each other and spoke a few pleasant words—like a pair of gladiators about to enter upon a contest. As they stood looking into each other's eyes Randall dimly recalled the face and manners of the southern boy.

"I have heard of you, and I guess you have heard of me," said Randall.

"Do you not remember me?" Porter asked. "We had a disagreement over in the Shenandoah Valley last June, and Ruth Dorsey came between us. I had been in the V. M. I. and was visiting the Dorseys at the end of the school year."

Then, woman-like, Mrs. Thorn interposed a word of explanation:

"You told Ruth about the Thorns of Bridgewater, and she wrote to Nancy, and the girls got well acquainted by letter and exchanged photographs. This boy came to us in Columbus with a letter of introduction from Ruth."

"I could think of no one but the Thorns of Bridgewater, and, as usual, I talked too much," said Randall.

"We would not agree with you," the lady answered.

Randall turned to his rival and spoke these friendly words of parting:

"I recall that you were a hard and a fair fighter. You will forgive me if I do not now wish you good luck."

"Oh, certainly," said the other. "We are rivals, but you will always find me fighting fairly."

"Then perhaps you will tell me where Nancy is."

Suddenly Randall had ceased smiling. He looked into the eyes of his rival and then turned to Mrs. Thorn. The lady's face had become serious.

"I will answer for him, and my answer is '*NO.*'"

Without a word more, Randall turned and left them, and in a moment was seated with his friends in the dining-room.

"I could swear, if—if it were not for you two," he said.

"Shoot, and I'll forgive you," Mrs. Fontane urged. "We're all sworn out. Our tongues are slick with it. We need help. Get busy."

'She is the—" he hesitated. "I—I don't dare let go. I'm a regular Vesuvius. She can be mean."

"She? As my father said of one of his neighbors, she is the damndest hell-cat of a woman that ever lived." With these words Mrs. Fontane began to unburden her spirit. She sighed and wiped her eyes with a dainty handkerchief.

Désirée added fuel to the fire by saying:

"She is no meaner than he is."

Mrs. Fontane arose with a breast full of stormy emotion.

"Excuse me. I must go to my room a moment," she managed rather brokenly to say, and left them.

"She will have a good cry and then she will feel better," said Désirée.

"I am sorry that my affairs have so tried her," Randall remarked.

They spent a quarter of an hour struggling with their depression and trying to eat and keep their dialogue going, when Mrs. Fontane returned. She was calm and in better spirit.

"I wonder how it is that Nancy is so helpless," said Randall.

"You do not know Gustavus Adolphus as well as I do," Mrs. Fontane answered. "She could win battles. Waterloo would have been easy for her. It was lucky for the Philistines that she was not there instead of Samson! Nancy had no idea that you were in Baltimore or they couldn't have got her away. I ought to have known that Mudd would spoil our plans. He has been treating Gustavus for neuralgia since she came here."

Randall spoke from his heart in saying:

"My fear is that Nancy may be overcome by so much opposition. Porter is quite a fellow after all."

"She doesn't like him," said Désirée. "She is as true as steel."

"But even water will wear a rock," Mrs. Fontane declared. "She is subjected to a constant drip of affection from Andrew Porter, and the wretch is handsome. He looks like a gentleman, and can act like one if he wishes to."

"I do not think so, and I know that Nancy does not," said Désirée.

"My child, that does not matter," her mother affirmed. "I have not lived all these years without learning a thing or two about women. A woman was made for a man, and, if there is only one man she can get, the time must come when he will look good to her. Gustavus Adolphus is well aware of that."

Randall thought it a cynical view of women, although he recognized that it was more than half true. He has said in his *Memories* that the beautiful and worldly Mrs. Fontane had more honest, downright humanity than any one he had met. Their talk was interrupted by the arrival of a messenger with a telegram for Randall which he read aloud:

Nancy has gone to the Charleston Hotel, Charleston, South Carolina, with Mrs. Porter. Address General Delivery, Charleston. O'Dowd.

"The O'Dowds of Cincinnati!" Mrs. Fontane exclaimed. "I knew that she kept in touch with them. You see the fix that Nancy is in. They keep her moving. She loves to travel, and they lead her on. She doesn't know whether you are alive or dead, and the poor girl is doing her best to get news from you.

When she gets it you may expect her to do something —not before. I have many friends in Charleston, thank God! I'll make a plan. You go and send her a long telegram to the General Delivery in Charleston. Then sit down, and if you know how to write a love letter for Heaven's sake write it. If you don't know how I'll give you a lesson."

"That's the one thing I am amply qualified to do," he answered as they left the table.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BARON VON ROEMER MEETS DÉSIRÉE FONTANE AND RANDALL SEES THE PRESIDENT-ELECT IN WASHINGTON

Two days later Randall had a cheering message from Nancy. It said:

> I am much relieved by your telegram and am looking for the letter. Shall mail one to you this evening. Shall not leave here until I see you if you will come.

That day he wired that he would come soon and inform her of the exact date of his leaving. He saw Mrs. Fontane and her daughter that evening.

"We are going to Charleston to-morrow," said the charming widow. "What a sweet smile we shall see on the face of the great G. A.! And I will say, 'Dear Lizzie. If you only knew how we miss you when you are gone.' She will kiss me, and say: 'Adele, there is nothing like the call of the blood!'

"Aren't we awful, we women? She will try to pull up her anchor and set sail again. I can see her now as she stands on the burning deck heaving at the anchor. But it holds. It will not come. She has got

Nancy to deal with, and Nancy has a will of her own. Her mother may cut off and leave her penniless. It would be like dear old Liz—just like her, and that is why I am going. I want to reassure the girl and take care of her if need be.

"Tell me, boy, have you money enough to take you through all this? If not, I will help you. I am going to stand by you until hell freezes over, as my father likes to say."

"I haven't much money, and I am glad that I may depend on your kindness for a loan—if I should need it," said Randall. "I hope to get all the help I require from my grandfather. The time has come when I can borrow a little and know that I shall be able to pay it back if I live."

The next morning Randall and Fritz went to the boat for Charleston to help the Fontanes aboard and bid them good-by. It was then that the stalwart, handsome, young German fell in love with Désirée Fontane.

"Tell me about him—who is he?" Mrs. Fontane asked Randall as they stood together on the deck of the boat.

"He is a great athlete—that is how I happen to know him. But he is also a modest, capable man, and a good fellow. I like him. He is a graduate of St. Xavier's College in Cincinnati. In Germany he would be the Baron von Roemer. I never heard him speak of that but once, and then only because I asked him about his people. His father got into a political row and came to America in 1840."

"Thanks! He is a good-looking boy, and has admirable manners," Mrs. Fontane answered. "I fancy that he is quite impressed by Désirée, or is it only his way?"

"I think that he is impressed, and that she is not exactly indifferent," said Randall.

"Pooh! It is only one of those little breezes that will pass in an hour, but isn't it interesting?" the lady remarked. "If you are going to be a true friend of mine, tell him what it means to be a Fontane of South Carolina, with three governors and a member of the Continental Congress in the family. We are a proud people, and we have a right to be so. I shall want a lot of information about the man who marries Désirée. He may balk at the height of the fence. If he does, he is not for her."

When the two young men returned to their room Fritz was eloquent in his talk of the beauty, modesty and womanly grace of the fair Désirée. Even the tones of her voice rang in his ears like the sweetest music, and Fritz was a musician of no mean accomplishments, being a fine player on the pianoforte.

"Charleston is now the great center of interest for us and for the whole country," he said. "We must try to get Mr. Lincoln to send us down there and report to him what is going on in that hot bed of rebellion."

Randall took up the idea, saying:

"I must have a talk with him as soon as he gets through to Washington. I am counting on his help and fearing that he will think me a traitor."

They worked night and day until on the twenty-second of February they were summoned to Washington. As a result of their reports the plans of the president-elect had been changed. He had passed the danger point, unexpectedly, by night, on a regular train, and had arrived safely at the capital.

Meanwhile, the friendship of the young men had become intimate. Randall had written some interesting letters, among which this one from the *Memories* should be presented here. It is as follows:

Dear Mrs. Fontane: I ought to tell you that my friend, the baron, is really in love with your Désirée. Just now he can only look one way. He talks of many things, but he thinks only of one. He is a worse companion than I am these days, but he is a real man.

His father is a builder and contractor in Cincinnati, and is now in the legislature of Ohio. For information as to his character, he would have you write to the mayor of Cincinnati, and to the president of St. Xavier's College of that City, whose address is below. I can tell you that he has courage as well as high character. I saw him go between two men who were fighting with knives the other night, and we kept them from harming each other until their friends had disarmed them. I look forward to the pleasure of seeing you soon. Meanwhile I shall be thinking often of your kindness to me and to the one I love best. The baron wishes me to warn you that he hopes to be going with me. His heart, like mine, is in Charleston.

In Washington Randall learned that the Lincolns were at Willard's Hotel. He went there and sent his card to their rooms. Mrs. Lincoln came down to see him.

"I congratulate you on the good work done in Baltimore," she began. "We appreciate it."

"Your congratulations should be given to my associate—Mr. Pinkerton's man, Roemer."

"And his reports speak of the important aid you gave him," she went on. "Mr. Lincoln will want to see you, but he is busy writing. At three o'clock we shall go for a ride with Mr. Eckert and Mr. Lamon. Can you come at five? He could give you a few minutes then, I think."

At five o'clock Randall found Mr. Lincoln alone in the room set apart for his use. He was leaning far back in his swivel arm-chair. His feet, in carpet slippers, were resting on the desk in front of him. He was studying a manuscript which lay in his lap. It was a draft of the historic document known as the "First Inaugural."

"My son, take a chair," he said, without looking up. "I'll be with you in a minute."

He continued to study the manuscript and presently tossed it on the table. He leaned back wearily and said:

"My son, give me your hand. Pardon me if I do not get up to greet you. I am tired. You found a lot of bitter feeling in Baltimore?"

"It astonished me," the young man answered.

"The situation is bad, but I think it will soon improve. Just now I have only two words to say to you—namely, 'well done.' But they lead to others. I have an easy appointment for you until the new government is organized. You are to look after the rest and entertainment of my valued friend, Randall Hope of Hopkinton. Don't let him worry or want for any comfort."

"I can best fill the appointment by keeping busy," Randall answered. "Roemer and I would like to go to Charleston at our own expense and let you know what is going on in the minds and hearts of the people there. The press reports will hardly do that for you. If Fort Sumter is likely to be attacked the sooner you know it the better, as well as the exact conditions in the fort itself."

"It sounds like a good idea," said Mr. Lincoln. "I'll think it over."

The able lady who had helped Mr. Lincoln in Springfield entered with a number of cards, among which was that of Mr. Charles Francis Adams.

"My boy, here is a member of the great Adams family of Massachusetts," Mr. Lincoln remarked. "You will want to see him. Sit down by the window there while we are talking."

Mr. Adams came in—a man of medium build, his head bald at the top and distinguished by silvery locks which curled about his ears. He had a strong face, smooth-shaven save for a short, silken throat-beard just above his collar. His was a dignified, erect figure, dressed in the height of fashion. Mr. Lincoln arose slowly as the newcomer approached his desk and gave him his hand and a friendly greeting. Mr. Adams' good wishes were expressed in fine words and an English accent. Mr. Lincoln sat down comfortably again, saying:

"Mr. Adams, you find me in my old Springfield slippers. My feet are tired, and I am giving them a chance to breathe, as we say in the West."

Mr. Adams had turned serious, and he spoke with a dignity filled with intentional contrast.

"Sir, our Ship of State is in stormy weather," he remarked.

"Yes, it's noisy weather," Mr. Lincoln answered. "Since leaving home I have been reminded of a traveler in the West who was lost one night in a thunderstorm. He floundered along until his horse gave out and the man knew not where he was in the darkness. A bolt which seemed to shatter the earth brought him to his knees. He was not a practised prayer, and his petition was short—'Oh, Lord!' he said, '—if it's all the same to You give us a little less noise and a little more light.' It's a dark hour, and there's much thundering, and the thing we need is light to show us our way."

Mr. Adams arose and after a polite word or two left the room. The keen intellects of Lincoln and the young man had not failed to detect the note of displeasure in his look and voice. It was evident that this little man, like other shallow observers, had come to confirm his impression that the president-elect was a rude unlettered clown and had succeeded in his purpose.

There were many in the land those days who thought that a statesman must have the grandiose and magnificent manner of a Webster, a Clay or a Calhoun. Every pin-headed man who took a seat in the House or the Senate began at once to imitate the Olympian grandeur of the old gods. He put on an over-sized rhetorical halo and resembled an ass in a lion's skin. It had not occurred to him that Webster's rhetoric was the natural dress of his own imagination and of no other.

Lincoln had come to Washington with no great faith in himself, but aware that the people had elected *him* to be president. Years before he had seen the folly of affectation—of high-stepping with the foot or the tongue. He was the same Lincoln in Washington that he had been on the circuit in Illinois. He turned to Randall and said with a smile:

"There is a man trained for talk with ladies, noblemen and kings. I reckon Seward is right about him."

It was probable that Lincoln had decided to appoint him Minister to England—a choice involving consequences which at that time no one could have foreseen.

As he was leaving Randall saw the melancholy Mr.

Joseph Israel Slats of Bridgewater in the anteroom and stopped to greet him. He was dressed in his Sunday clothes.

"I knew you'd never fergit that name," said Mr. Slats. "Dan'l Webster an' I have names that stand for something."

"How is your wife?"

"Gone to live with her own folks," said Mr. Slats, sadly.

"Up in Vermont?"

"No, up in Heaven. Her folks had all gone on ahead."

"I am sorry. You must be lonely without her."

"I could be the lonesomest cuss in the world but I don't have time. I keep busy. Say, I'd like to set down with you an' talk things over."

"Come to my room at seven-thirty to-night," said Randall as he gave his address to Mr. Slats.

"All right—if you ain't afraid o' ketchin' somethin'."

"I'm on my way to Charleston," said Mr. Slats when he was admitted to Randall's room that evening. "I've got to see Mis' Thorn, an' I hear she's there. She was a witness of my wife's will, an' I've got to git her to sign a paper, if she'll stand still long enough. I've followed her from Richmond to Baltimore, an' to-morrow I'm off fer Charleston."

"Tell me about the mulatto boy, Thomas Jefferson," said Randall.

"Got there all right. I lent him a hoss an' we rode nigh the York State line. He was so white there wasn't no trouble in movin' him till I got to Hickory Grove. There was an advertisement posted in all the border towns for our boy. An old Copperhead got up a posse of his friends an' come after us above Hickory Grove an' we had to have a fight. The Copperhead was bruised a little."

"Were you not afraid of being arrested?"

"No, all you have to do with a Copperhead in the North is to lick him proper. It mustn't be no halfway job. If you do it thorough every one will be so glad that they'll invite you to eat ice-cream an' cake an' make a speech in the Town Hall."

"Did Thomas pay you for the horse?" Randall asked.

"He sent it prompt after he got there, an' he's workin' for your stepfather, Ezra Town. Didn't they write you?"

"No. The Yankees hate to write letters. They can work night and day. They can invent all kinds of things. They do not mind hardship and hunger. They can sit through a sermon two hours long—but they're scared of letter-writing. They put it off and dodge it as long as they can, and when they sit down to write they look as if there had been a death in the family, and every one from cellar to garret has to keep his mouth shut and walk on tiptoe. My folks have sent me only one letter. Sometimes I wonder if they are living or dead."

"They fergit how to spell, an' hate to show their ignorance. I ain't got no conscience about that," said Mr. Slats.

"I hope to go to Charleston myself to-morrow," Randall informed him.

"Say, let's stick together," Mr. Slats proposed. "You're so slick an' well fed an' harnessed I can't hitch up with you, but you can lead me behind, an' if ye git in bad goin' I can pull a little. I'll agree to keep my hair an' whiskers combed an' my face clean."

"I shall be glad to have you with me, and shall keep in touch with you."

That was the end of their interview.

Next morning Randall was notified that he could consider himself at liberty to go to Charleston if he chose to do so. Mr. Lincoln hoped Roemer could be spared to help in the work proposed. That, however, would be left to the judgment of Mr. Pinkerton.

A telegram from Mrs. Fontane informed him that she would look for him and his friend Roemer on the steamer leaving Baltimore February twenty-fifth.

It came to pass that the two young men set out for Charleston with Mr. Slats on the day which Mrs. Fontane had appointed. They reached their destination in the early evening and the good lady and her daughter met them at the dock and insisted that the young men should go with them to their hotel where rooms had been engaged for their accommodation. Mr. Slats went to the Charleston House and Randall and Fritz with the ladies.

Their coach passed through crowded streets. The city park was lighted with torches and a bonfire. A speaker was addressing a mass of men and women. There the great structure of the Union itself was on fire. "How far will it spread?" Randall asked himself.

A supper was served in Mrs. Fontane's private apartment at eight o'clock. As they sat down she said:

"When you don't know what to do with young people, give them something to eat. I have to keep you concealed so there is nothing to do but eat and talk, and nothing to see but each other."

"For me it is enough," said Fritz with a glance at Désirée.

"What a bright and promising young man!" Mrs. Fontane exclaimed.

"I only hope that your daughter may be as promising," Fritz answered.

"I should like to be able to show you Charleston. Beauregard's army is here."

"The only part of Charleston in which I have a personal interest is in this room," said Roemer. "The army I must see, but it will not excite me after this."

"What a gay young Romeo!" Mrs. Fontane sighed. "Permit me to change the subject."

She went to a closet and brought out a suit of gray flannel.

"You see, I am making uniforms for our soldiers," she went on. "We southern women can turn our hands to anything. To-morrow evening we are going to the masked ball of the new Confederacy. Désirée and I have made your costumes. Mr. Hope will be Mephistopheles; the baron will be Romeo. You will have to try them on to-night so that we can see what changes are to be made, if any."

The young men went with Mrs. Fontane to another room and were told to put on their costumes. This they did and came out in full regalia. The ladies clapped their hands with delight.

"You will do!" Mrs. Fontane exclaimed.

"As for myself, I'm not as comfortable as I might be," said Randall. "It squeezes me, and I am in fear that it will burst."

"Never mind," Mrs. Fontane answered. "A boy ought not to be hurt by a little squeezing. He should get used to that."

With her chalk she marked the changes to be made and said:

"It will be all right to-morrow. There's plenty of room in the goods for expansion."

When the young men had returned to the ladies, having put aside their costumes, Randall said:

"What a wealth of romantic suggestion is in all this!"

"My dear young man, I am fond of romance and its strategy," said Mrs. Fontane. "Sir Walter Scott would have loved me and I could have been so useful to him. Hear my plan. Helen Meredith, a New York girl and a friend of Nancy, will be Marguerite;

Nancy will be Juliet—both masked. Early in the evening they will go to the dressing-room and exchange masks and costumes. They have been practising this little trick and can do it in sixty seconds. At eleven o'clock you will meet Marguerite in the vestibule. Be sure to be on time. You should be there waiting at ten-fifty. My coachman will conduct you to three saddle horses. Then you will mount and follow him to pier three. My father's yawl will meet you and take you to his yacht in the harbor. Désirée and I and a few friends, including a minister, will be aboard. We shall go for a cruise. You and Nancy can finish the romance. I shall have led the horse to water. I can do no more."

"A great plan!" Randall exclaimed. "But I want to be sure of knowing Marguerite. How she would look I have no idea."

Désirée showed him a picture of the costume and promised to point it out to him on the floor.

"And I will ask her to wear a bow of scarlet ribbon on her left shoulder," Mrs. Fontane added.

Roemer quickly remarked:

"I hope it will not be a long cruise, for I shall be more alone than I ever was in my life here in Charleston."

"My dear baron! You are a dependable creature," said Mrs. Fontane with a laugh. "I knew that you would speak up like a man. You have qualified. We want you to be one of the party."

Suddenly there was a rap at the door. Mrs. Fontane opened it and exclaimed—"Nancy!" In half a moment the girl stood in the embrace of her lover. For a little time neither spoke, and those who looked upon them were silent. Then Nancy, with tears in her eyes, whispered:

"I must hurry. Mother and Andrew Porter are waiting below."

Then said Mrs. Fontane:

"Give me the soldier's suit quick, and send Nancy down in five minutes."

She hurried through the hall toward the stairway to create what diversion she could with the gray uniform which she had been making.

Those few minutes were precious and the young man had begun to fill them.

"Nancy, few words are needed between us," said he. "I know that you love me, and you know that I love you. Let us fight it out now. Let us go down and face them and tell them that we will no longer be separated."

"It would spoil our plan, and you—you would be in danger," the girl answered. "Porter has many friends here, and they hate Yankees. They would stop at nothing, because in Charleston they think that the war has begun."

"I have heard of the plan," said Randall. "I hope it will end our troubles. If it should fail I will try again and keep trying. My love for you is like the rocks and mountains of my own country. The years come and go, but they stand."

She looked up into his face and put her hand tenderly on his brow and said:

"I have been keeping a message for you in my memory. Its words were to be the first that should pass my lips after we had become man and wife, but I can not wait. I must say them now. 'My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep. The more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite.'"

A fervent "God bless you!" came from the lips of the young man, and he added: "Since I was born I have heard no sweeter words. They are like the murmer of a brook in the deep woods when one is thirsty."

Through their lips they spoke to each other, but no more with words. Nancy broke away from him and hurried down the hall.

Désirée Fontane and Fritz Roemer had sat in a distant corner, pretending to be deeply interested in an *Album of the New Photography.*

"By jove!" Désirée exclaimed with a sigh. "My heart is beating so fast I can hardly breathe. There's just nothing in the world like a good love scene, if it is well acted."

Fritz was prompt to answer:

"Just wait. One of these days I'll show you a love scene the like of which you never saw in your life."

"So much depends on the look and words and manners of the young lover," said Désirée. "Randall Hope could touch the heart of a stone."

"Pardon me, but I have some conceit of myself," Fritz answered. "And how well you would fill the arms of the man who really loved you!"

"You are a forward youth," Désirée answered turning away to hide her blushes. "I—I am not sure that I like you. I am not to be won with audacity and talk."

"I only ask for a chance to win you fairly," said Fritz. "You captured me with a word and a look. I can hope for no such luck with you. I warn you that I am in love."

"It came very suddenly, and it may leave you as quickly as it came."

He looked into her eyes and said:

"No, I am sure that I have that thing which never leaves a good man once he has got it."

"Well, if it is worth having it will keep and grow," the girl answered. "I do not like things which are half grown. That is one reason I like you."

Fritz spoke from his heart:

"You do like me then. Thanks for that straw of hope. I must have a talk with your mother."

Mrs. Fontane returned. Her eyes glowed with animation. The soldier's uniform was on her arm. She said: "I kept them talking about soldier's clothes, and told them how to get patterns and do the sewing until Nancy came. I told Gustavus that Désirée was showing her costume to Nancy. How one has to lie in this naughty world! It is dreadful. Poor Nancy! She was as cool as a cucumber when she returned.

"Dear old Gustavus has been trying to pull up her anchor for a week, but it won't come. Nancy has refused to budge. Now, boys, I'm going to send you out to my father's yacht in the harbor. On thinking it over, I reckon it will not be wise for you to stay here. The town is too small, its eyes too penetrating, its tongue too long. My children! We must take no chances with our plan."

"I have only one regret about moving," said Fritz. "It will separate me from you and your daughter."

"What an eager young colt you are!" Mrs. Fontane exclaimed. "We shall go out to the yacht to-morrow afternoon. We shall dine together. Then we must see that you are properly dressed for the ball, and in the evening we shall take you with us. For once you must be clay in the hands of the potter and do as you are told. In the morning my father will put the baron ashore to look about a little. Randall Hope must stay aboard. Now you have your orders. My father's captain is waiting for you in the office. He will take you aboard. Come, let us go down-stairs and find him."

It was near midnight when they were shown to their room on the handsome steam yacht of Mr. Jasper Favel, planter and gentleman, whose wit and wine had long been famous in the Carolinas, and whose political influence, then waning, had been sought by every ambitious candidate in the golden age through which he had lived.

CHAPTER XVII

ANOTHER CLASH OF WITS BETWEEN LIZZIE AND ADELE

Mr. Favel was a kindly, humorous, white-haired, hospitable gentleman about seventy years of age. His wife was dead and his great plantation had been given to his sons. He loved the sea and spent most of his time cruising. He was fond of his daughter and grandchild. He loved to have them with him. In his old age he surrendered himself to their management. It amused and delighted him, now that his wife was gone. "My sons can not be with me, and why should I not give my life to the ladies?" he was wont to say.

At eight o'clock the captain took the young men to the master's room and presented them to Mr. Favel, who sat reading a paper in an easy chair by his desk.

"So you are the Yankee boy who is in love with Nancy Thorn," said the old gentleman to young Mr. Hope. "The name of James Buchanan is not better known to me. My daughter would think yours the more important. To her a president is not to be rated with a young lover."

He laughed and shook his head as if he would say between the lines: "A woman is a woman, and I, for one, am glad that she is." He was neatly dressed in black and looked immensely comfortable in his easy chair.

"She has been very kind to me," the young man remarked.

"Did you ever see a lady with a brain like a sword and a heart like a millstone?" the old gentleman asked.

"I think that I have," Randall answered.

"You know damned well that you have," said Mr. Favel, as another breeze of laughter rippled across the calm surface of their dialogue. "The sword and the millstone were both born in the spirit of man. What an amount of slashing and grinding has been going on in the world! But you and I never find fault with the ladies—God bless them! They amuse us. I have had infinite pleasure out of a little comedy which has been going on in my family these many years. It was meat for Lizzie to steal young Porter from the bright-eyed Désirée."

Mr. Favel rolled his gold headed cane of polished mahogany on his knees as he shook with laughter.

"For my part, I am glad that Désirée is free," said Fritz Roemer.

"You are the grand young baron whose father came from Germany," said the old gentleman with a twinkle in his dark eyes. "I welcome you to the comedy. There's one good thing about you, young man. You know a pretty girl when you see one. I hope you know how to court her. Old as I am, I could give you a lesson. But, come, my brave lovers, let us go and have some breakfast."

As they sat down in the handsome cabin, paneled with highly polished wood, the old gentleman began a jolly stream of illuminating talk.

"Elizabeth does not come here or allow Nancy to come, and, egad! She is wise. The fair Nancy and her mother would be in for a voyage. It would be meat for Adele to get under way with them and Porter ashore and you on call. Then I should hear some interesting lines."

He put down his coffee cup and shook with laughter. His talk turned to topics of more serious import:

"Young men, I am much worried these days, and such little matters rest and divert me. I still have a deep respect for the old flag. The South has much cause for complaint, but these preparations for war distress me. I am for peace by compromise and agreement. I say, let the North have the slaves and be damned with them, if it will pay a fair price for our niggers. A war would be a terrible thing. It might last for years. In the end the South would be overrun, defeated, devastated. The flower of our manhood, North and South, would be put to the sword. Our rich men would be beggared. War is a ruinous business and you young fellows don't seem to realize it."

"I think that I do," said Randall.

"I feel it so strongly that I am putting my money into European securities," said the old gentleman. "I hear that you are a friend of Abe Lincoln."

"I am proud to say that I am."

"I hope that your pride and friendship are well placed," Mr. Favel went on. "We fear that he is likely to be a tyrant who will listen to no persuasion. I wish that you could make him understand our peril—that you would entreat him to avoid war."

"It will interest him to learn that we have talked with a man like you, and he will want to know how, in your opinion, he may avoid it."

"Well, I am going to say something in confidence to you two. You are to repeat it only to him. First, we must hold these wild young bucks, North and South, in check until negotiation has had time to do its work. We must avoid bloodshed. Sumter must be quietly strengthened and provisioned. That only to hold Beauregard and his men here. The fort is weak. If it were besieged it would have to surrender soon. Its weakness is a temptation. If Sumter falls hell will break loose. When Beauregard moves his host of young bucks to Virginia that state will be swept off its feet. It is now the mainstay of peace. While Virginia stands firm there is hope for compromise."

Fritz went ashore with Mr. Favel and spent an interesting day driving about the old city, with his host, and calling on the latter's friends, while Randall sat in the comfortable smoking-room of the yacht reading a novel. Mrs. Fontane and her daughter came aboard with Fritz and the master at five. They had a jolly dinner in the cabin whereat the old gentleman toasted the ladies so freely with his favorite Madeira that his daughter condemned him to his room for a nap when they arose from the table.

"With a daughter like this one has no need of a brain," he observed rather tipsily. "Am I not the most fortunate of men? Comrades, I say the whole country is drunk and should be sent to its room for a nap. Virginia is the daughter who will do it."

He sang merrily as he walked by Mrs. Fontane's side to his own quarters.

"He is one of the very dearest of men and so cunning," said the lady as she came out of the master's room. "Parties are a bore to him these days, and when he wishes to avoid them he drinks to the health of the ladies until his own is slightly impaired. Then he snores his way into dreamland and stays there until the danger is passed."

It was a warm clear evening. The feel and odor of spring came out to them in a gentle breeze from the west. They sat on deck for half an hour or so while Mrs. Fontane told of her plans. The boat would be out at sea by midnight on its way to Washington.

"The happiest days of your life are just ahead of you, if only the Lord favors us with good luck and weather to match it," she said to Randall. "Oh, to be young again with the magnolias blooming and the smell of spring in the air! But it will be fun to steer you and Nancy out of your troubles and to help you get settled in Washington. It will remind me of my own nest-building years ago."

"She seems to forget us," said Fritz Roemer, turning to Désirée.

"The moon has not yet had a chance to shine on you two," said Mrs. Fontane.

"It has been doing well to-night," the girl answered.

"I have been feeling it," Fritz remarked. "But its beams are not so persuasive as the light that comes from a pair of eyes I know. I have got my little speech all prepared for you. Daniel Webster never said anything so filled with passionate appeal."

"Well, I must say that, as an orator, you are establishing a reputation," said Mrs. Fontane, as she arose. "Come. We must stop dreaming and get ourselves in costume. We should be going ashore in thirty minutes."

They went to their rooms and dressed. The young men were out on deck in their costumes before the ladies appeared. In a few minutes the latter came out gorgeous in color. Désirée suggested an azure-winged butterfly. In her hair were fragrant, fresh cut roses.

"There are times when I am especially glad that I have eyes and can see," Randall remarked.

"But it is sad to see and have to wait," said Fritz.

"You are both lovely, but in that costume Désirée can beat the new moon in the spring."

"Who would suppose that Yankees could talk like that?" Mrs. Fontane exclaimed. "It is said that they can only be eloquent about religion. Come, I must look you over. There are times when I do not trust men, and this is one."

She turned them about and carefully surveyed them.

"I think that you will do," said she. "It is time we were going."

They went ashore where a carriage met and conveyed them first to Mrs. Fontane's apartment. There Randall was asked to take a careful look at the coachman while the ladies went in to adjust their masks. Soon they drove to the old armory where the ball was in progress.

"I shall be leaving here at ten o'clock," Mrs. Fontane said to Randall, as they alighted. "My guests will meet me at the dock a few minutes later and we shall go aboard. The tender will return in time to meet you. We shall take the baron with us."

At the door the party presented their tickets and entered the great room filled with music and a whirl of color as many fine ladies and gallant gentlemen moved in harmony with it. They were waltzing in a broad aisle between the spectators. Randall had learned to dance in Springfield, and he with Mrs. Fontane and Fritz and Désirée spun their colors into the moving web. When they were resting Désirée came and called Randall's attention to the costume of Miss Meredith which he was to remember, and to that of Mrs. Thorn whom he was carefully to avoid. The young men exchanged partners.

After that, the dance has no further claim on the reader's attention. Randall saw his friends leaving at ten. He tried to get a dance with Nancy, but without success. At ten minutes of eleven he went out in the vestibule. Some one touched his arm. He turned, and there at his side was the welcome figure of Marguerite with the scarlet ribbon on her left shoulder. There, too, was Mrs. Fontane's coachman.

The latter set out for the horses. The young people followed him and all mounted and rode away. At the dock the masked couple gave their horses to the coachman. The young lady took the boy's arm as they walked to the boat side.

"Dear Nancy, I hope that we shall never again be parted," said Randall, after they had left the horses.

But Nancy did not answer. She was crying. She was leaving a fortune and a devoted mother for his sake and burning the bridge behind her. It was natural that she should have a sense of loss and regret.

"Dear Nancy, I know how you feel," he said. "We will not try to talk now."

They got aboard the tender and were quickly conveyed to the yacht. The guests who had come with Mrs. Fontane sat down to supper in their cabin. The master and his daughter and granddaughter received the young couple with a merry welcome. Affectionate greetings came down to the latter from the deck. They climbed the hanging stair. The slender figure of the girl hurried toward the eager arms of Mrs. Fontane.

"You poor dear thing," the lady exclaimed in a tender voice as they embraced each other.

Then, kisses and tears and half a moment of silence and this query from the madame:

"Are you ill, child?"

No answer came from the masked girl.

Mrs. Fontane's intuitions had begun to register.

"Why do you tremble so?" she asked. "For heaven's sake what is the matter?"

Her tone was heavy with misgivings. She gave the girl a little shake. The latter stepped back and removed her hat and mask. She stood revealed in the lamplight. Randall recognized the maid who had served the supper in Mrs. Fontane's apartment on the evening of his arrival with Fritz Roemer.

Old Mr. Favel began to chortle with deep amusement.

"By George, Adele!" he exclaimed. "This is a pretty bit of drama. I wouldn't have missed it for a thousand dollars."

Mrs. Fontane sank into a chair. She spoke in a sad tone.

"God knows I like a joke, father," she said, "but it is no time for levity when I am being ground in the dust. I can not stand it. I will not stand it."

She shed a few tears and arose with a sense of indignation which could not be restrained, and pointing at the girl, said:

"You poisonous wretch! Will you tell me how you happen to be here?"

"I am just trying to earn a living," the girl answered. "Don't be angry with me. I was hired by Mrs. Thorn to go into service at your hotel and, if you had guests coming, I was to let her know who they were and as much as I could learn of what was said between you. The head waiter was paid to help me. When you were talking over your plans the other night I was listening at the keyhole. Of course I reported them. That is what I was paid to do. Mrs. Thorn had a costume made for me. I was waiting in the vestibule of the armory until Mr. Hope came out of the door. I touched his arm and we went away together. I think that Mrs. Thorn's friends were doing their best to make Nancy late. That is the whole story."

Again Mr. Favel broke into hearty laughter.

"Father, this is enough to drive one to drink," said Mrs. Fontane. "Will you please send for some brandy? I need it."

She turned to the girl and added with admirable restraint in a melancholy tone:

"Please give my love to Mrs. Thorn. It will not burden you to carry it. She should find a desert island and go there to live with you. Tell her that I think you two should live together and apart from other people. I can think of nothing worse and may God have mercy on you! Remind her how happy the rest of the world would be."

She turned to Désirée, and covering her eyes with her hands, said:

"Ask the captain to put her ashore. The sight of her is like a deadly pain to me."

"And, if you please, I would like, also, to be sent to the shore," Randall declared.

"I have a letter for you," said the spy, as she drew it from a pocket in her robe and put it in his hands.

"It will be a communication from Gustavus Adolphus," said Mrs. Fontane. "Let us know what it says."

Randall opened the letter and read aloud:

My dear Mr. Hope: I honestly wish you good health and happiness, and for that reason I strongly advise that you leave Charleston to-night. The people here are in a warlike mood, and you and your friend are suspected, not without good reason, of being northern spies in the pay of a government detested by all loyal southern people. I keep my friendship for you in spite of all that has happened. Therefore, I beg of you to go. For your comfort I ought to tell you that Nancy still thinks that she loves you. It may be that the time will come when you can marry. But, if so, it will be because you have had my help and that of no other person.

Yours respectfully,
Elizabeth Thorn.

"I do not give advice—I command you not to think of going ashore," the old gentleman said to Randall.

Then he bade his captain to take the young lady to the dock. When she had gone he turned to his daughter and exclaimed with a laugh:

"Isn't she a deep one!"

"In low cunning she could out-do the devil," Mrs. Fontane rejoined in a melancholy tone, as she sipped her brandy. "But we must be cheerful and join our friends in the cabin. God knows I would like to go to my room and weep. This is frightful."

She arose with a sigh and took Randall's arm.

"Poor boy!" she exclaimed. "My heart goes out to you. We must hold up our heads and look happy."

Randall has told in his *Memories* how Mrs. Fontane gaily entered the cabin with no sign of bitter defeat in her face or manner and became at once the liveliest member of the party. Thereafter he often refers to her as "The Wonder."

Soon a steward came to Randall and announced that a man who had come alongside in a row boat wished to speak with him. The young man went below and found Mr. Slats in a boat by the boarding stage and invited him to come up to the deck. Slats left his boat and boatman and went with Randall.

"I can unload in about five minutes," said the newcomer as they sat down together. "I know about what's been goin' on, an' I've come to tell ye to skedaddle. It's a dangerous place fer you to be in. Tell Abe Lincoln that I've had a talk with Anderson an' he's got to have men an' provisions in Fort Sumter or give up. I'm goin' to stay with Nancy an' her mother. I've hired out to 'em. Goin' to work on their plantation in Georgia. I had to choose between you an' my country. I don't know as my country would have me, I'm so old an' shot up, but if you'll let me I'm goin' to enlist in your war without pay.

"If I've got it right you want to marry Nancy, an' she wants to marry you. Very well. Slats is for ye. He likes ye both. My boy, Will, used to play with that gal, an' they was fond o' one 'nother. The last word he ever said was 'Nancy.' Say, it's cur'us—awful cur'us—how you remind me o' him. I'm goin' to keep watch o' this case—I am. Porter has got me to reckon with—that's sart'n. I'll keep ye posted. But don't ye write to me—not a word—'less I give ye leave. I'll keep peckin' away. Nancy an' I understand each other pretty well."

He arose and added: "I've scraped the bottom of the wagon box, an' I'll say good-by. I've got that card you give me."

Randall thanked him and they parted. The young man returned to the cabin where Mrs. Fontane was saying good night to her guests. When he went to his room the yacht was weighing anchor and before he slept she was out to sea.

When they landed in Washington, Fritz and Désirée were engaged and the wedding was to occur in Charleston on the first of May.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH RANDALL FEELS THE FAITH OF A GREAT SOUL AND RETURNS TO HIS HOME IN HOPKINTON

THE new administration had begun its memorable task. That afternoon Randall left a note at the White House announcing his return with information which he would be pleased to report at the president's convenience.

Letters awaited the young man at his lodgings, one of which informed him of the serious illness of his mother. At seven in the evening a messenger from the White House brought a note signed A. Lincoln which said that the latter would be glad to see him at nine-fifteen. So, on the moment, Randall presented himself at the White House and was shown to the family apartment above stairs.

The president was resting on a sofa. Mrs. Lincoln sat by a table on which a shaded lamp was burning. She had returned from a dinner party at Senator Seward's. She was in a low-necked gown and lace bertha—a creation of the celebrated Mrs. Rich. The skirt was in panels of plain and brocaded fabrics. It was caught up, here and there, to show the flounces and tucks of a handsome petticoat. Her handkerchief drawn through a small ring hung from a short chain of gold attached to a circlet on her little finger. Her hair, arranged in braids on top of her head like a coronet, was adorned with velvet and pearls.

She had been reading aloud to her husband an editorial in the *New York Tribune.* The boy Willie sat on the other side of the table studying his geography. Tad was asleep on a rug close to the sofa within reach of his father's hand. Mr. Lincoln was in his shirt-sleeves with comfortable slippers on his feet. The lady gave the young man a cordial greeting. The president took Randall's hand as he said:

"Forgive me if I do not rise. I have found a kind of hole in the day and have lain down in it and am busy resting. I hate to knock off, even for a minute, when I get a-going on that job."

He had been worn out by the gross, incredible rapacity of those who were seeking spoils at the capital.

"I suppose that you find your work these days more tiresome even than splitting rails," Randall remarked.

"It's easy to split rails once you get the hang of it, but it worries me to see a lot of stout choppers trying to split the country. It's a tough old stick, full of knots and well seasoned. It will bother them. There are so many minds that have been dried in their own smoke. They are like a withered herring that you can buy for a penny. Tell me what you saw in Charleston."

Randall read the report which he had carefully written. It was a pessimistic document telling of the plight of Fort Sumter, of the bitter spirit in South Carolina, and the growing army of Beauregard. It repeated the warning of Mr. Favel and concluded with these words, very brave to come from one so young and yet including in their vision the incredible truth now known to all:

> The whole South is arming. My conviction is that in spite of all we can do Sumter will fall and Virginia join the Confederacy. That will mean a war against the great wealth of the slave states and a most formidable force of men. England will, naturally, give her sympathy to the South and, openly or secretly, what help she can to the great profit of her mills and factories. In that event it will be a long war, the result of which no man is wise enough to foretell.

Mr. Lincoln arose to a sitting posture. The calm and moderate tone of the report had impressed him.

"My son, it is a startling opinion," he said. "I want to ask you a question. What would you think of Horace Greeley if, after struggling for years to build up *The Tribune,* he should throw his type out of the window and tell the country to go to the devil? Is it not unthinkable?"

"I think that it is," Randall answered.

Mr. Lincoln went on: "And God, who has been working for centuries to build up a free country, has not done it for the pleasure of knocking it to pieces. Your judgment is remarkably mature for one of your age. You must have faith also."

He arose and went to the table and picked up a volume of Bancroft and opened it and read:

> The caprice of fleeting existences bends to the immovable Omnipotence which plants its foot on all the centuries and has neither change of purpose nor repose.

"There is one thing that a man may know," Mr. Lincoln added. "He may know, if he will, whether or not his cause is just and whether the immovable Omnipotence is for or against him."

The young man was thrilled by the singular animation in Mr. Lincoln's face as he continued:

"Guizot is a great student of history. He tells us how man advances in the execution of a plan which he has not conceived and of which he is not even aware. Only that government can endure whose aim is the welfare of mankind. When put to the test, it must not be found wanting. I think that a great plan is forming to rid the world of one of its worst evils. We must possess our souls in patience and avoid turning them over to the enemy."

As if wishing to change the topic Mrs. Lincoln asked:

"Did you see Nancy?"

Mr. Lincoln smiled at the sudden shift. "After all there's nothing like romance," he remarked as he returned to the sofa.

"Only for a moment," Randall answered in a sad tone. "I am discouraged about Nancy. Her mother is determined to keep us apart and if war comes I shall lose hope. I am in rather low spirits."

"Oh, don't give up," said Mrs. Lincoln. "From what I hear the other fellow has more reason to do that. Nancy is in love with you."

"True, but what chance have we? I have tried both persuasion and strategy."

"And this too shall pass away," Mr. Lincoln quoted. "That is a sentence applicable to all situations. The president's wife ought to be able to help you. Be of good cheer."

"The president's wife is sympathetic but must maintain a neutral attitude," Mrs. Lincoln answered with a smile.

"The president is under no such obligation," Mr. Lincoln remarked. "He is unalterably opposed to the separation of units which ought to be united. My son, it may be that I can give you a boost."

"Thank you. I shall need it," Randall answered. "I have much to worry me. My mother is sick and if I can be spared for a few days I would like to go home."

"Go and see her at once and give her my best wishes," said Mr. Lincoln. "I would like to know the feeling up to date as to my attitude in the northern counties of New York and in New England. I'll give you some letters to leading men."

Randall returned to his lodgings with a mind enriched by imperishable memories. The simple, homely scene in which he had had a part and above all the faith of the great man, who was his friend, were calling him to higher ground. Those people had not been changed by the power in their hands or the grandeur of their surroundings. They were the same kindly, busy folk that he had known, but not as well as he could have wished, in Springfield.

Their new home—like the old one—was mainly for work and rest. Their interest in his personal affairs had touched the young man. Was their going to the White House a part of the great plan of which he had heard? He found in his bag the digest of Mr. Emerson's lecture in Utica and he read it. Had Mr. Lincoln surrendered his soul to the Omnipotence which had neither change of purpose nor repose? Was he the God-led man, far in advance of all others, in whom was to be the fulness of the time to come? He sat for a long time thinking and then he drew his chair to a table and began to write his *Memories.* It was that quiet domestic scene at the White House and the talk of Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln which engaged his attention that night.

Before he was out of bed in the morning some brief notes of introduction from the president were delivered to him and at ten o'clock he took a train for the North, arriving in New York late that evening. Among the notes of introduction in his pocket was one to Mr. Horace Greeley, the distinguished editor of *The Tribune.* He was in a hurry to get home and so decided not to present it until he should be returning from the North.

He rode into the snow-covered land of his birth and left the train at Potsdam next day and felt again the cold breath of the March wind coming down off the frozen water planes in the northwest and heard, far and near, the ringing of sleigh-bells. He was driven to his old home in a rutted road which, part way, was like an alley cut in deep drifts. A welcome awaited him which became one of the best of his memories. His grandfather met him at the sleigh side. The old gentleman put his hands on the shoulders of the young man and gave him a playful shaking.

"Well, I declare!" he exclaimed. "If this ain't my boy, Randall! Well, of all things! Come right into the house and git warm. Yer mother is still in bed but is slowly gettin' the better of it. Here, boy, le'me carry that satchel."

Over the right to carry the bag they had an affectionate tussle in which the old gentleman prevailed. The young man stripped off his overcoat and gave it a shaking at the storm door. His grandmother, still active and erect, stood by the table. There was a tender note in her voice when she exclaimed:

"Well, I want to know!"

Then for the first time she embraced her grandson and kissed his ruddy cheek.

"It's silly, I know, but I can't help it," she remarked apologetically as she stood wiping her eyes.

Then there came a feeble voice from the bedroom which said:

"I want to see my boy."

Randall hastened to his mother's side.

"I never knew my mother until that moment," he writes in his *Memories*. "The atavistic ice in her character had melted and I felt the depth of her love for me. 'My boy, my boy, how often have I thought of you and longed for you and prayed for you,' she said.

"What a confession was that! She had been worn out by hard work for the man she had married and her heart had begun to fail. There were many like her in the land of my birth. I do not think that any negro in the South had a harder master."

"Will you ask your grandmother to come here?" she said to her son.

When the old lady had come to the bedside, the younger woman said: "Mother, I wish you would bring my gold watch from the bureau drawer."

It was brought and she put it in her son's hand. "There, I want you to have that," she said. "Your father gave it to me. You used to beg me to let you wear it and as I lay here it has made me happy to think of giving it to you when you came back. You ought to have it."

For the first time tears came to the eyes of the young man. Then he laughed.

"The Yankees are not such a cold stolid lot after all," he said with a smile.

Old Joshua came to the door roaring with laughter, his bandanna handkerchief in his hand.

"Say, gen'ally speakin', they're purty stiff folks, but when they get warmed up they're as limber as an eel," he remarked. "I guess I better go out an' split up a few blocks o' wood or I'm liable to disgrace myself."

He wiped his eyes.

"I don't believe ye know how," young Randall laughed.

"Well, I ain't had no practise in bawlin' since I was a boy," old Joshua answered. "But I'm feelin' meller an' lookin' at you an' yer mother is kind o' risky business."

The old gentleman put on his cap and went out-of-doors, returning soon with an armful of wood.

The little, shiny gold watch was, in itself, of small account to the young man. They did not realize how far he had moved on. He was no longer the simple youth he had been when he left home delighting in shiny things. He resisted his impulse to press the watch back upon her. He kissed it and put it in his pocket and said:

"In the future I shall be able, I think, to be a better son. I shall protect you from hard work. You shall be a slave no longer. Before I leave here, that is to be understood. Where is Ezra Town?"

"He has gone to his lumber camp in the woods and will be there a week," his mother answered. "They are getting ready for the spring drive."

"Gran'ma an' me are goin' to get up a reg'lar Christmas dinner," said the old gentleman, who now stood in the doorway. "There'll be roasted chickens an' mince pie an' preserves an' frosted cake an' other fixin's. Have ye seen Old Abe lately?"

Randall smiled and asked: "Do you mean Mr. Lincoln?"

"That's the man. We call him Old Abe up here."

"I hope it means that you love him," Randall answered. "Yes, I saw him in Washington. He sent his best wishes to my mother."

Mrs. Town raised her head and looked up at her son. "Did he?" she asked in a tone of grateful astonishment. "Did he send them to *me?*"

"He did. You are really quite an important person, mother."

"We're for him, heart and soul. *We* believe in him," said Joshua. "We hope he'll bring them rebels in the South to time. We're gettin' ready to back him too. Companies are bein' organized an' armed an' trained in all the villages. We kind o' mistrust there's goin' to be war an' Old Abe can have every able-bodied man in St. Lawrence County to fight the damn Secesh when he says the word."

He took down his old long-barreled musket from above the fireplace and brought it to Randall.

"See, I keep it 'iled proper," he said. "That gun an' I could make some trouble, while the powder lasted, if we be a little older than some. I don't think nothin' o' swingin' the ax all day or steppin' off twenty mile twixt here an' the Stillwater. You tell Old Abe that if there's any fightin' to be done I want to be in it an' it won't take no wages to bring me right up next to the enemy."

Randall looked at the rugged figure of his grandfather and smiled. He was seventy-two years of age, but the old spirit of America was in him.

"I'm a Dan'l Webster man," Joshua continued. "I'd rather be split up myself than see the country tore to pieces. The men who're stabbin' this republic orto be hung. It makes me fightin' mad—gol darn their pictur's! I'd like to grab holt o' one o' them rebels an' push him ag'in' the wall an' shovel my idees into him an' shake 'em down till he was full."

In his crude way the old man had expressed the spirit of the north country, which was as bitter as the spirit of South Carolina. They had a dinner at twelve of which Randall does not fail to speak in his *Memories* and with especially fond recollection of the roasted chickens and the mashed potatoes enriched with butter and cream and sprinkled with black pepper, and of the mince pie. He learned of the arrival of the mulatto boy, Thomas Jefferson. He had worked on the farm through the summer. They had grown fond of him.

"I lent him twenty-five dollars and he has gone to school at Canton," said old Joshua Hope. "He writes to us every week but we miss the boy. We are going to do what we can to help him."

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH EZRA TOWN BEGINS TO REAP THE HARVEST OF HIS OWN SOWING

Randall stayed at his old home and helped with the sugaring. Ezra Town returned from the lumber woods. He was polite, but there was no warmth in his welcome. His growing wealth had built a wall around him within which he found all the pleasure that he seemed to desire. It was the strange, silent pleasure of estimating and planning. His riches were the favorite theme of gossip in the neighborhood. He was a Union man, but not enthusiastic. The troubles of the country did not much concern him. His interest was shut in by the boundaries of his property. Abraham Lincoln did not, in his opinion, amount to much.

The snow vanished in warm sunlight. The brooks, hurrying toward the rivers with the icy remnant of the melted winter, were noisy with their burden. Randall had been out in the hamlets and villages of St. Lawrence County and then had traveled from Ogdensburg to Malone and Plattsburg and Middlebury and Manchester and had sent his report to the president.

When he returned to Hopkinton spring had come. News flew over the land that Fort Sumter had been attacked and must fall. It spread like a fire in the wind. It ran through every road and back on trail and river into the deep woods. Now, every day, the farms of St. Lawrence County were mostly deserted. Men, women and children went into the villages to get the latest news and to stand in the streets and talk about it. Crowds gathered around the telegraph offices.

Word came that Sumter had fallen and that Mr. Lincoln had issued a call for volunteers. Then the hard-handed, weather-stained giants in the lumber woods dropped their axes, pikes and peevies and began to stream into Colton, Potsdam and Canton. Crowded hotels and barrooms rang with shouts of defiance and revelry.

The fifteenth of April, 1861, was a clear day with a cold wind out of the north which stiffened the mud. Randall hired a horse and buggy from the storekeeper and drove into Potsdam with his grandfather. The young man's mother was now out of bed every day and able to do a little light work. Ezra Town was in a fit of the blues. He came and went with a shadowed countenance and said nothing save, now and then, a word of complaint about his wife's sickness and the fact that nobody was willing to work. Soon after Randall and his grandfather had left that morning, word came to Mr. Town that his men had deserted the drive and gone to Potsdam. In his opinion

Abe Lincoln was ruining the country. He put a saddle on his favorite horse and rode into the village to find the deserters and send them back to their job.

Randall found a telegram awaiting him at the office in Potsdam from Mr. Lincoln's secretary directing him forthwith to meet Fritz Roemer at the St. Nicholas Hotel in New York and proceed to Washington with the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment. Many took off their hats to the young man that day, for it had become known in the village that he was a friend of Old Abe and in his employ. Hundreds shook his hand and wished him to tell the president that they were ready to give their lives for the Union.

Suddenly Randall and Joshua heard shouts of anger and saw a quick stir in the crowd on Market Street some few rods from where they were standing. They hurried to a kind of human whirlpool. Its outer edges were in swift motion pushing toward the vortex—an open space occupied apparently by a noisy man in violent action. Some one had been thrown into the mud of the street and was being lashed with an ox-whip and was calling for help.

"Damn his soul to hell!" the whipper shouted. "He said Old Abe was ruining the country. Get a rope. He ought to be hung."

Others echoed the demand for rope.

"Make way," Randall called as he pushed through the crowd which opened before him. In half a moment he stood by the prostrate form of Ezra Town whose face, cut by the lash, was covered with blood. The young man seized the ox-whip and wrenched it from the hand of its wielder. Then he said calmly, but in a voice heard by every one in the crowd:

"My friends, I ask you to let this man alone, not because he is my stepfather, but because Abraham Lincoln would ask you to do it if he were here. He does not know Mr. Lincoln. I do. If the president were here he would say to you: 'Boys, every man ought to have a fair chance to get over being a fool, and he generally can if he doesn't go to the wrong doctor.' "

The crowd was laughing. The danger point had passed. Randall took Mr. Town's arm and led him away.

"Let us go home," said the young man. "I must get back in time for the evening train. I wish that you would ride with me so we can have a talk. I'll get grandfather to mount your horse."

As they were riding toward the home in Hopkinton, Ezra Town broke the silence by saying: "Randall, I have not treated you right."

"You may treat me as badly as you like. If you do not insult me I can stand it," Randall answered. "But I must ask you to be more kind and thoughtful in your treatment of my mother."

"Boy, I love your mother," Town answered.

"But not so much as you love your money," Randall rejoined. "Her health is failing and you must do what you can to save her strength and make her life more comfortable."

"What can I do?" Town asked.

"Get a hired girl—get two hired girls if necessary. Don't think so much of your money. It ought to be making friends for you as well as earning interest."

So out of its fulness the clean heart of the boy spoke to the man who sat beside him, and the man had a stern look on his face and was silent.

"I don't want to be unkind to you, but those were your own men who threatened your life," the boy went on. "They hate you. Their hands have made you rich and your hands have made them poor—desperately poor. You care not for their troubles. You send money away to convert the heathen while you are busy making heathens at home. Your farms and mills and camps are a big factory whose chief product is heathens—the kind of men who beat you and threatened your life. Now I've got it out of me. I'll say no more, until you have spoken."

They rode a mile or so in silence. Then Ezra Town spoke:

"I'll go and get a hired girl to-morrow," he said. "As to the men, I think you are wrong. They could live in comfort if they did not spend so much for drink. If they got double their wages, they would have just as little at the year's end."

"I do not agree with you," Randall answered. "Hatred and a sense of wrong breeds the thirst for drink. It helps them to talk about it and keep it alive and warm. If you'll put love in them, they'll drink a lot less."

They had reached their house in Hopkinton—a journey of fifteen miles. Mr. Town washed his face in the shed. Randall eased his way by telling the family that a drunken man had attacked his step-father.

Old Joshua Hope entered and called Randall into his bedroom. The old man closed the door.

"I may never see ye ag'in," he whispered. "I've got two thousand dollars in the Potsdam Bank an' I want to give it to ye. There'll be enough left."

"Not yet, grandfather," the young man answered. "Keep it where it is. When I need it, I'll let you know. I'll see you again before long."

"God bless you, boy!" the old man whispered in a trembling voice.

Ezra Town hitched up his best horses and drove the young man to the nearest railroad station late that afternoon. As they rode Randall told him of the kindness and the faith and the great heart of Lincoln. To all this Mr. Town listened in silence. When they arrived at the station it was growing dusk. As they were parting, Town put a little paper wad into the hand of the young man, saying:

"That is a present for you."

It was a ten-dollar bill. Randall pressed it back upon the generous giver.

"I thank you but I could not take it," he said. "I do not need your money. What I do for you must be without price. I want to help you if I can and money would spoil it all."

Town stood a moment, in silence, his eyes squinting thoughtfully and looking downward. He spoke in a low tone as he said:

"I'm much obliged." Then slowly he got back into the wagon.

Randall pitied the man as he saw him drive away, in the gathering gloom, his head bent. And then the youth said to himself:

"Gosh! That man is hopeless."

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH RANDALL FEELS THE WRATH OF HORACE GREELEY AND OF THE MOB IN BALTIMORE

RANDALL found Fritz at the St. Nicholas Hotel in New York.

"I'm in a terrible fix," the latter said. "I was to be married soon in Charleston, South Carolina, and now I can not get there and the Lord only knows when it will be possible. I hope that this deviltry will end in a few days."

"Has Désirée or Mrs. Fontane had anything to say about Nancy in their letters?" Randall asked.

"Nancy and her mother have gone to their plantation in Georgia and Slats is with them. Mrs. Fontane had a letter from Nancy. She is well, but there is bad feeling between the girl and her mother. That little adventure in Charleston was the beginning of it."

"We are both in a fix," said Randall. "When do we pull out of here?"

"This evening at eight. We may have some strong-arm work to do in Baltimore, and there's a good chance of our getting a pair of sore heads in that mob of rebels. We're expected to do what we can to help the local police if necessary."

Randall disregarded this unpleasant subject in his answer:

"I'm going down to Printing House Square to see Mr. Greeley. I shall return before six."

The young men parted and Randall walked down Broadway to Barclay Street and into the Square where he could see the office of *The Tribune.* He was thrilled by his look at the famous and magnificent Astor House and the ample home of the famous newspaper. He trembled with excitement as he followed a polite office boy to the sanctum of Mr. Greeley. The great editor was in his most irascible mood.

Randall describes him as a large, sprawling, big-boned, human mountain with a noble, picturesque and snowy summit. He wore spectacles and his bald head was adorned with a crescent of silver hair. His thin, silken throat-beard was as white as the easy fitting collar which partly concealed it.

"Lincoln!" he exclaimed in a high pitched voice when he had read the note of introduction. "He is under the control of Seward. Tell him that in my opinion the country is going to the devil and that the thing we need is a *president.*"

He clapped his hands together when he said president. He shambled about the room. He stopped, leaning against the door, and said in a peevish falsetto voice: "Lincoln thinks that God is going to take care of the country. You tell him, for me, that it's his job and not the Almighty's."

The editor sat down at his desk and began writing as if thereby to intimate that he had no further time for conversation.

"At least he ought to be willing to give the Lord a little help," he added without looking up. "Tell him for God's sake to get rid of Seward. That fellow never had a serious conviction in his life."

"I shall tell him what you have said," Randall answered. "Mr. Lincoln has the greatest respect for your opinions."

"The country is flooded with opinions," the great man shrilled. "My best one is this: What we need is action—prompt, decisive action."

Mr. Greeley's thoughts were now flowing rapidly to the sheets of white paper over which he leaned.

"Mr. Greeley, it has been a great pleasure to meet you. Good afternoon," said Randall.

"Young man, good afternoon," Mr. Greeley answered as he went on with his writing.

Randall went into Mr. Barnum's museum, which was near, and entered the Astor House for a look at its splendors. At a quarter of six he met his friend Fritz Roemer in the office of the St. Nicholas Hotel and the two sat down to their evening meal in its magnificent dining-room lighted by large crystal chandeliers. The dinner included every delicacy which the ample markets of the city could provide, but the price of one dollar was, in the view of the young man from Hopkinton, very "steep."

Each wore a Pinkerton badge when they crossed the North River to board the first section of the train which was to transport the Sixth Massachusetts Regiment to the capital. They spent a restless night rumbling over the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad and waiting on sidings. It was a long night full of noisy horse-play and loud laughter and conversation and coarse jests and cheers and merry songs.

No one seemed to have a thought of the scene of violence and terror upon which they were to enter in the city of Baltimore save the two men who had been there and who knew what to expect. Day had come when they arrived in the metropolis of Maryland. There the regiment had to change cars and be hauled to the Washington depot. A pushing, howling, desperate mob had gathered at the station.

The scene, while the troops were changing, was full of danger. Outrageous and insulting taunts were hurled at them by the crowd. It was like a tiger roaring with rage and awaiting its chance to strike. It pressed up to the car windows showing its fangs—innumerable knives and pistols. It cursed into the faces of the soldiers and spat upon the window-panes. Bricks and paving stones began to fly. A soldier was hurt by one of them. Another was wounded in the hand by a pistol shot.

The Massachusetts men were now thoroughly mad. Those who had been transferred to one of the waiting cars were ordered to load and fire from the windows at will. A few shots were fired and the crowd rushed out of range. It piled stones and telegraph poles on the track ahead of the standing train. Some of the local police held the mob at bay with their revolvers while Randall and Fritz removed the obstacles from the track. The loaded car began to move slowly. Those who sought to block its way were roughly handled by the powerful men who preceded it.

A shower of bricks, aimed at the four defenders of the car, drove them from their position fortunately uninjured. They had been lucky in dodging. The effort to transport the troops in cars was abandoned. Under Captain Follansbee the companies filed out, formed deliberately on the sidewalk and started their perilous march. They had traveled but a few paces when they met a procession hastily improvised, led by a man carrying a flag of the new confederacy, and marching straight upon them. Confusion followed.

Randall and Fritz and the two policemen hurled and hustled the leaders of the mob out of their way. There was a struggle for the possession of the hostile flag. Hoots and groans and the taunt of "nigger thieves" filled the air. The troops pushed on with dogged determination and, hoping to pass the crowd, broke into a double quick. The rioters took this for a sign of fear. They followed with showers of clubs and stones and the loud-yelled cry of "cowards."

A number of troops and rioters were injured. Randall seized the arm of a ruffian who threatened him with a bowie knife and hurled him to the ground. Another who struck at Fritz with a club had it taken from him with such celerity that he fled.

Marshall Kane arrived at the head of fifty policemen and allowing the column to pass closed behind it and ordered his force to draw its revolvers and shoot down any man who tried to break through. But the riot continued.

Such, briefly, was the experience of the first regiment to answer the call of Mr. Lincoln. Was it going to be impossible for the loyal men of the North to cross the soil of Maryland and reach their capital before it should fall, defenseless, into the hands of the enemy? Were they all to run this appalling gauntlet and reach their destination bruised, bloody and embittered?

When Randall left the train at Washington his right hand, cut by a flying stone, was in a bandage. He went at once to the White House. Mr. Lincoln was in a meeting of the Cabinet. Soon the meeting ended and then the young man was conducted to the president's office.

"I can remember no time when his face had in it a deeper melancholy," Randall writes. "Yet he smiled when he saw me and said: 'Well, my son, how is your mother?' "

The young man reported briefly the solid loyalty and growing enthusiasm which he had observed in the people of the North and his talk with Mr. Greeley.

He imitated the tone and the manners of the great editor at which Mr. Lincoln broke into loud laughter. Then the latter said:

"He reminds me of an old neighbor of mine who hit his thumb with a hammer and did some tall swearing. In a minute he apologized in this manner: 'Oh, Lord, don't you mind a word I say when I'm mad. I don't mean it.' Mr. Greeley is in the same fix. He's just mad. He doesn't mean it."

Randall gave an account of what had happened in Baltimore, of which the president had been imperfectly informed by telegraph. The latter rested his head upon his hand, his elbow on the table at his side, as he listened. He looked weary and deeply serious. When Randall had finished his story Mr. Lincoln said:

"A commission of southern gentlemen is waiting to see me. I wish you to remain here while I talk to them."

They entered. Their spokesman requested that no more troops be sent through Maryland and added that what the South wanted was peace on any reasonable terms. Mr. Lincoln walked slowly back and forth from his desk to the fireplace, his hands behind him, his head bent, a look of indignation in his face, as he answered them:

"You gentlemen come here to ask for peace and yet have no word of condemnation for those who are making war upon us. You express your horror of bloodshed and yet you do not lay a straw in the way of those who are organizing in Virginia and elsewhere to capture this city.

"You attack Fort Sumter and troops sent to the defense of the government and you would have me break my oath and surrender it without a blow. There is no George Washington in that—no Andrew Jackson, no manhood, no honor, in that course. I have no desire to invade the South, but I must have troops to defend the capital. It lies surrounded by the soil of Maryland and troops must come across its territory if they are to come at all. Our men are not moles. They can not dig under Maryland. They are not birds. They can not fly over it. There is no way but to march across Maryland. There is no need of collision. Restrain your rowdies in Baltimore and there will be no bloodshed."

In these calmly spoken words Lincoln had defined his attitude. The answer pleaded for peace, but the peace desired would have meant dishonor for the president and a dismembered union for the people, and Mr. Lincoln dismissed the commissioners by the declaration that he had nothing further to say.

"Critical days are ahead of us and there will be important work for you to do," he said to Randall as the latter was leaving the White House.

At his lodgings Randall found a letter from young Andrew Porter, his rival, mailed in Atlanta two weeks before. It said:

Despised Sir: You have shown by your effort to kidnap the young lady in whom you and I have a special interest that you are a coward. It was like the sneaking Yankee that you are. Why not try fair competition in the open, as a gentleman would, instead of resorting to the tactics of a bandit? I hope to meet you face to face again some time, and if I do I warn you that I shall leave no doubt in your mind as to my opinion of your conduct and of all cowards. When we have whipped you damned Yankees, as we shall soon, I will not be contented until I have whipped you. I have enlisted in Beauregard's army. In battle the knowledge that I am fighting you and men like you will give me courage and determination.

Sincerely yours,
Andrew Porter.

In this remarkable letter Randall thought that he saw the spirit of the hasty and passionate South born of misunderstanding and nourished by bitter prejudice. The wishes of the young lady were of no importance. Her rights were being in no way considered. She, like the bondsmen, was under duress and expected to do as she was bid. He had gone to Charleston to be a liberator, if possible, and not a kidnaper.

Porter's selfish passion had blinded his soul and intellect. He was not able to understand the motive or the true character of his rival. He had rushed to the conclusion that said rival was a knave and a coward, and had fired upon Fort Sumter.

Such were the thoughts, colored somewhat by his own prejudice, which passed in the mind of Randall Hope. They were shared by Mrs. Lincoln to whom he took the letter that evening. She read its bitter sentences with an indignant protest and heard with amusement Randall's account of the remarkable adventure in Charleston. It is but a scanty report of the interview which he gives in his *Memories* but from reading it one clearly gets the impression that he had won her sympathy and help.

The letter had produced a singular reaction in the mind of the young man to whom it was addressed. Thereafter the whole great controversy between the North and the South became to some extent a personal matter.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PANIC IN WASHINGTON AND THE CALM AND LONELY MAN WHO STOOD UNMOVED IN THE MIDST OF IT

WASHINGTON had been for years a museum of provincialisms and personal eccentricities. The huge Sam Houston and his scarlet necktie and his vest of spotted leopard skin and his large sombrero and gorgeous serape and his habit of whittling at his desk had resigned from the Senate to be governor of Texas. But in the capital there was still a curious variety of dress and manners.

Long hair and beards of varying length and fanciful designs—like many a house façade gay with carpenterial adornment—were on exhibition in the halls of Congress. The upper lip and chin were generally "cleared," as young Mr. John Hay was wont to put it. Mustaches were unknown until the middle 'fifties. The first daring spirit to appear mustached in Washington society was laughed at and said to resemble "a Tennessee hog driver." So Mrs. Senator Clay has assured us.

Another type of eccentricity had appeared at the capital. There, under Buchanan, the spirit of wealthy southerners had expressed itself in unexampled extravagance. The Gwins, the Browns, and the Thompsons had each spent seventy-five thousand a year in a life of reckless entertainment.

These good people had no high opinion of the plain man who had come to Washington famed for his skill as a rail-splitter and as an outspoken enemy of the one thing upon which southern prosperity was founded. It was they who led the memorable stampede of 'sixty-one. When a southern state seceded its senators and most of its citizens holding public office under the government resigned and left the city. The sheep were being separated from the goats.

Hundreds of clerks and many officers of high grade and function had resigned. Among them was Franklin Buchanan, commandant of the Washington Navy Yard, and nearly all his subordinates. Some few of the latter remained and they succeeded in burning many valuable ships in the night of April nineteenth. The capital was in a panic.

The secession of Virginia on the seventeenth, the burning of Harper's Ferry on the eighteenth, the riot in Baltimore and the destruction of railroad bridges, the abandonment and ruin of the great Navy Yard and its ships filled the capital with gloom and anxiety. Four days had each brought a great disaster.

Washington was like a city stricken by a pestilence. Its business houses were closed. Willard's Hotel, swarming with gay life a week before, was deserted—save by its servants. The secretary of state—whose shifty tactics were hidden from Mr. Lincoln but known to the incorruptible Gideon Welles with his embarrassing note-book—was largely responsible for the perilous situation of the government. He still advocated and hoped for some sort of compromise with the enemy.

But the lonely figure at the White House clung to its purpose. Randall had gone to confer with the president as to an important and perilous mission which the latter had proposed.

When he was entering the Executive Mansion, Mr. Ward Lamon, who was responsible for the safety of Mr. Lincoln and his family, called the young man aside and said to him:

"There are those who would kill the president if they could. Suspected men are in the city. He does not like to have people think that he has to be guarded. What we do is done without his knowledge. If you are going in I wish you would stay as long as he will let you and keep as near him as you can and be ready for quick action in case of trouble."

Randall had sat down near Mr. Lincoln and had finished reading aloud a letter from St. Lawrence County as to its military preparations, one sentence in which had deeply interested the president. It was this: "Every able-bodied man in the town of Russell has presented himself for enlistment."

They were interrupted suddenly by the entrance of the secretary of state.

"Hello, Seward!" said the president. "This is my young friend, Randall Hope."

"It would seem that the situation is not quite Hopeless," said the distinguished secretary as he shook hands with the young man.

Then turning to Mr. Lincoln he added: "Mr. President, I have just learned that Captain Magruder of the First Artillery has resigned."

Randall had read in the morning paper that the main reliance of the capital for defense was Magruder and his battery.

"Only three days ago Magruder came to me and with his own lips repeated, over and over again, his protestations of loyalty," said the president. He arose and asked with indignation: "Seward, is there no patriotism left? Is all sense of personal obligation, of every-day honesty, and manly character gone also? Is everything going to crumble at my touch? To whom are we to give orders if clerks and captains and cōmmodores and quartermaster generals and governors of states and court justices prove false in the moment of need?"

Seward—a handsome figure of a man, fashionably dressed in dark clothing—sat looking at the president with a smile. His dark hair, now turning gray, fell gracefully on his brow. There was almost a look of amusement in the keen gray eyes under thick, slightly silvered tufts. To him the troubles of which the president complained were only a phase of a difficult political situation. They had but to discover and apply the right expedient. He was a great inventor of expedients. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his prominent nose. There was a touch of humor in his tone as he said pleasantly: "Mr. President, I wish that I had your capacity for seriousness."

"So do I," Mr. Lincoln answered. "It would give you the one thing you most need."

"Perhaps you're right. Tom Corwin said that if he had his life to live over he would be as solemn as an ass. But you and I know that levity like adversity hath its uses."

It was a moment full of revelation for the keen intellect of the young man. He has written in his *Memories:*

> Seward had not the mind of a statesman. His genius had been perverted in the political school of Mr. Thurlow Weed. He was a polished cynic and undoubtedly a great chooser of words. If they had been loaded with the weight and divinity that comes of moral conviction he would have been a literary artist of the first magnitude. His exquisite taste in letters gave to the Surrendered Soul the training it needed in the art of self-expression.

"Seward, in this desperate situation what are we to do?" the president asked.

"In brief, we must meet exaction with concession," the secretary answered.

And Mr. Lincoln replied: "That reminds me of a shiftless fellow out in Illinois of the name of Smith. He had traded horses until he was traded out. He had nothing left but a wife and a number of children. A stranger drove up one day and asked if he would like to trade horses. The unfortunate man answered: 'I haven't a horse to my name. There's nothin' here but Smiths.'

"That's exactly our fix, Seward. There's nothin' here but Smiths. And we can do no more trading."

Mr. Seward laughed as he left his chair and said: "I shall have a plan to lay before you this evening, Mr. President."

The secretary withdrew.

The young man thought that it was extremely fortunate for his native land that Lincoln and not Seward was president.

"My son, I am now to see a committee of the business men of Washington," said Mr. Lincoln. "You may stay here if you have any interest in these proceedings."

"I like to be with you. It is a wonderful school for me," the young man answered.

The committee of business men entered and its spokesman addressed the president in behalf of the growing commercial interests of the capital. The spokesman expressed a fear that those interests and all the people related to them were in great danger. He urged that concessions be made for the sake of peace.

Again, in his answer, the president spoke of the one thing to be defended above all others—the Union and his honor and that of his associates in the government. Then he said:

"There is involved the question whether your children and my children shall enjoy the privileges which we have enjoyed. I happen, temporarily, to occupy this White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father's child has come. This privilege which belongs to the children of all the people, forever, must be protected. If the constitution which guarantees it is to be wrecked what have we left to rely upon but the pleasure of those who wreck it?"

Then came a deputation of clergymen from Pennsylvania with encouraging words. Their spokesman said that he felt assured that the Lord was "on our side."

"I am not at all concerned about that," Mr. Lincoln answered. "My constant anxiety and prayer is that we may be on the Lord's side."

General Scott—a large, erect old gentleman with white side-whiskers and mustache—magnificent in full uniform, arrived with Secretary Cameron and a number of military engineers from the War Department.

The president turned to Randall and said: "Now, my son, I will let you go."

So Lincoln in the midst of panic and varying counsels held to his purpose in those shadowed days. Suddenly a New York mail arrived. It was three days late. The newspapers had cheering accounts of the gathering storm in the North. The Seventh Regiment had set out for the capital. Governor Sprague and his Rhode Islanders had sailed. There had been a monster meeting in Union Square and an outpouring of half a million people in great processions. The New York Common Council and a Union Defense Committee were chartering and freighting ships. The mighty host in the free states was awake and stirring. It was ready for the sacrifice of war behind its chosen captain.

The Seventh Regiment arrived. No one in the federal capital could ever forget that day. It was the twenty-fifth of April. In an hour the paralyzed city recovered its health and cheerfulness. Doors were opened, and windows thrown up. The population came out upon the streets. Great crowds gathered at the station. Cheer upon cheer greeted the handsome young men from the metropolis. It was like a holiday.

For two days Randall Hope had been assisting Mr. Lamon at the door and in the corridors of the White House. This thought came to him that day: "Now, Mr. Andrew Porter, I think that the damned Yankees are going to turn you into a spoiled prophet."

In the panic Mr. Lincoln had shown no fear; he was without boasting or vain bravado.

"He is like a big river; he knows his way and holds to it," Randall wrote to his mother. "Often when I look at him I wish that my own spirit were not so coarse and vulgar, for I have not his faith, although I think that I feel it coming to me, and I like to boast and to curse my enemies. I would not have you think that Mr. Lincoln is a saint. He is very human and I hear some racy stories that he is said to have told since he came to the White House.

"You will be surprised to learn that I have decided to be a soldier. I feel the call of the Union and I must go. The Telegraph Service is not yet organized. Until it is I shall do what I can to help. I am big and strong and can stand the hardship and the shock of battle—likely soon to come I guess—as well as any man."

Next day Randall went into camp with the Seventh Regiment and began his training in the art of war.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF THE PRESIDENT WHICH LED TO THE ROUT AT BULL RUN AND ONE OF THE GREAT ADVENTURES OF RANDALL HOPE

JULY had come. The newspapers of the North and the leaders in the Senate and the House were cursing the government for inaction. They demanded that the rebellion be promptly and decisively crushed. Mr. Lincoln shared their eagerness to end the troubles of his country, but, having had no military training, he could only trust to the judgment of the once able skirmisher in the small wars of the old time—General Scott.

That ancient and magnificent gentleman was incapable of preparing a big army to meet a bigger one and of directing their campaign. While he had been drinking tea and receiving compliments and telling of hairbreadth escapes in the wilderness of old, America had grown into a great nation and the art of war had changed. It had now to deal with great masses of men, with heavy artillery and a new kind of rifle, both of a much extended range. Yielding to the solicitations of the press and the politicians he sent an ill-trained army to meet another quite as ill-trained but directed by one of the ablest generals the world had seen. The result was the bloody and disgraceful stampede of the broken Union forces from the battle-field of Bull Run.

Randall, who had become a first lieutenant of infantry, had lacked courage in the presence of the enemy after a man at his side had been cut down by a cannon-ball. He and the brave lads of his company were enraged at the lack of leadership in the northern army. The arrant cowardice of many of its soldiers whom they had seen running by in a panic increased their bitterness. When the Union forces were streaming in wild retreat toward the capital, Randall and his comrades stood on the crest of a hill trying to stop them. For a time the staunch fellows were like an island in the midst of rapid water. Its edges began to wash away in the current but most of them stood firm. Cannon-balls from the enemy were screaming over their heads and falling far beyond them. A force of rebel infantry was charging up the hillside. Randall saw through his glasses that the man who was leading it had a familiar look and carriage. A prisoner said that it was his regiment at the head of the column.

"Who commands it?" Randall asked.

"Colonel Patrick O'Dowd."

It was then that Randall was hit, not by any of the flying bullets, but by a sense of shame harder to be borne than even a mortal wound. God! These rebels, including Andrew Porter and Patrick O'Dowd, would think that the Yankees were all cowards. He rallied his comrades.

"Boys, I'll show you which way to run," he shouted. "Follow me and we'll make 'em stop for repairs."

Some fifty of his comrades followed him.

It was a splendid charge they made, firing as they advanced. They were quickly cut down by a rain of bullets, but not until they had created some confusion.

There have been men favored of the gods in battle. In this hour Randall got a notion that the bullet which could take his life would never be cast. His clothing was torn, his thigh raked, an ear had been cut and burned by a rifle-ball. But still he stood fighting with a hot pistol, when came the end of that desperate adventure. He was felled by the blow of a rifle butt from behind, but not until he had killed or injured four of the men who surrounded him. Yet he owed his life not to the protection of the gods or his own prowess. He would have been shot down at close quarters but that Patrick O'Dowd had recognized him. O'Dowd and his men had macerated the gallant young New Yorkers, and as Randall kept coming on the colonel ordered that he be taken alive.

Randall came to in a few minutes. Patrick and one of his men were on their knees beside him. The young New Yorker could hear the roaring of distant cannon. There was no fighting near them. He could even hear the song of a meadow-lark, above the ringing in his ears, and then the words of Patrick:

"You Yankee divvle! I saved yer life an' God knows I thought ye'd put a hole in me before we could stop yer divilment. When I seen ye drop yer rifle an' draw yer sword I says to them, 'Good God Almighty!' says I, 'does he want a dool with a regiment? Let him come close,' says I, 'an' fire when I give ye the word.' And then I see the face o' ye and the pride o' ye an' the name o' ye. I says, 'Don't shoot,' I says. 'We'll take the lad alive,' an' then ye begun to lay into us an', by the blood o' the Virgin Mary, I thought ye'd rip our bellies open before we could break ye down. I don't know what they'll do to ye—sure I don't."

"And I don't care what they do," Randall answered. "If you dirty rebels are going to run this country, I don't want to live in it. I have only one thing to ask. There's a young man in this army by the name of Andrew Porter. I want to see him."

It happened that Porter had been publicly decorated for the best markmanship in his brigade and was well known in the army of Beauregard.

"He is from Maryland and is in a company of the Tenth Virginia," said an officer who was present.

"Tell him, if you please, that Randall Hope is a prisoner and would like to see him."

Randall was put in "the pen"—a wired enclosure containing some three hundred prisoners—and late that afternoon was moved some miles to where a part of Lee's army was encamped. That evening the victory was celebrated with speeches and loud yells and singing and skylarking.

In the midst of it two guards came to the pen for Randall Hope and marched him through a jeering mass of soldiers standing in tented streets to the headquarters of General Kirby-Smith of the Fourth Brigade. The general sat at a table with a number of his officers. They had been drinking to the new nation and its president and had not yet drained their glasses.

Kirby-Smith—a stalwart, handsome officer with dark hair and gray eyes—arose from the table and gave the young prisoner a courteous greeting. A member of the general's staff tells us in his memoirs that the latter turned to his companions and said:

"Gentlemen, this is the Yankee devil of whose remarkable exploit you have been hearing. They say that lead will not touch him and that his sword was like a thunderbolt in the hand of Jove. His name is Randall Hope. He is a brave man."

The officers arose and shook his hand.

"Gentlemen, I have been lucky but am no braver than the rest of you," said the blushing youth. "The battle was lost and some of us thought that it would be better to die than run, and to die fighting, as becomes a good soldier, and I rather wish that I had died."

The men who heard him were touched by the noble patriotism of the youth.

The general said: "I believe that you wish to see Captain Porter of the Tenth Virginia."

"I do," Randall answered.

The general sent his orderly for the young Confederate officer. The New York boy was telling of the spirit in the North when Porter entered. Randall arose and pointing toward him spoke out:

"General, this man has called me a coward and threatened that when we met, face to face, he would whip me," said the prisoner calmly but with indignant eyes, as he stood, erect, looking at the stalwart, sinewy figure of the young Confederate. "But for the respect and gratitude I owe you for your courtesy I should not be able to restrain myself. I want him to know that I am willing to fight him with any weapon he may choose or with my bare hands, and I will trust you to see that I get fairly treated."

"I choose pistols," Porter answered with a flushed face. "I am eager to fight this man."

The general shook his head as he said: "Boys, you will not be permitted to endanger each other's lives in this camp. If you want a quiet, decent gentleman's fight with the gloves to show which is the better man and will agree to observe the rules I give you, we will close the tent and you can have it out."

"That will suit me," said Randall.

"And me," Porter promptly answered.

The general said to his orderly: "Put two guards in front of the tent and let no man come near unless it is one with orders from the chief."

He bade the boys strip to their waists and brought two pairs of boxing gloves from a chest.

"Boxing is my favorite amusement," he remarked. "I have a good supply of the tools with me and I shall be able to fit you out."

Three other officers, one of whom was Patrick O'Dowd, entered the tent. Patrick gave Randall an encouraging tap on the shoulder.

The gloves were put on and fastened. In the memoirs of the Confederate officer above referred to are these words:

> When I saw the magnificent, bare torso of the Yankee Devil and his long powerful arms and the play of the muscles in his back and broad shoulders, I knew that Porter was in for a hard time of it although he was himself a well built boy and probably the most expert boxer in our army. The general had often boxed with him in hard gloves, and knew his prowess. The Yankee had a swollen ear and a slight bullet scratch on his left shoulder.

There were about a dozen of the general's friends who by holding hands formed a serviceable ring around the young men. The fight, it will be seen, was the result of a deliberate plan to bring the boys together and get some amusement out of the settlement of their differences.

The general stood in the ring with the contestants and gave them the rules. Neither was to speak to the other until the contest ended. It was to be in three-minute rounds, with a minute's rest between them. In case either fell he was to rise and resume the fight within ten seconds and was not to be struck until he was on his feet. There was to be no holding and no hitting beneath the belt. The defeated man was to congratulate and forgive the other.

The fight began without the usual amenities. There was a swift interchange of blows. Porter was very quick and more expert than his rival. His swift feints were followed with a volley of stinging blows. One of them landed on the sore ear of his rival bringing a trickle of blood. Another reached Randall's wind, and for half a moment he was in serious trouble. But the hardy youngster managed to keep his feet and maintain a fairly adequate defense in the fierce attack which followed. He recovered quickly. His adversary, now sure of an easy victory, had grown careless. Suddenly Randall's right shot out like the arrow from the sprung bow and reached the nose of his rival with a loud smack. Porter went back upon the ring with such violence that it broke and let him down full length upon the turf. He rose slowly and was dazed and reeling when he was fairly on his feet. Then the general announced that the first round was over.

Chairs were brought and the boys sat down for a minute's rest. Patrick O'Dowd acted as Randall's second, bringing him water and working a palm leaf fan before his face. The boy was in no need of these attentions however. He was breathing easily and was neither distressed nor alarmed.

His adversary was tired and bleeding profusely at the nose. The latter had lost its graceful aquiline curve. A surgeon was sponging it. In answer to a whispered suggestion of the latter the captain said, angrily, that he would fight it out.

The second round began. Porter was not rushing now. He was sparring carefully. Randall assumed the offensive and reawakened the fighting spirit of the southern boy with a left jab to the stomach and a right swing to the ear. Porter resumed his whirlwind tactics as Randall wished him to do, for he knew that they would soon wear him out. The northern boy was cautious, being content to take care of himself and keep a cool head and counter when he had the chance. The southerner was losing speed and strength but on his feet was always dangerous. Again he let up and again Randall forced him into his former pace. He came back to it with astonishing vigor, but his rush met a stunning return. Near the end of that round the New Yorker countered so heavily that Porter fell into the arms of the bystanders but quickly regained his feet. He was in distress when he went to his chair and Randall was beginning to feel the pace. It had been rapid.

Both boys came back to their work refreshed by their minute's rest. Porter got a stinging blow in the face and answered with a wonderful rally in which he repeatedly reached the body and head of the New Yorker but without the drive to inflict serious punishment. His bow had weakened. It lacked the panther-like spring it had had. Randall went at his enemy like a cooper working on a barrel. A swift blow to the jaw and the battle ended. Porter lay helpless on the ground and was counted out. Randall lifted him in his arms and carried him to his chair. He was a spoiled prophet. The general took the hand of the defeated young gladiator and said:

"My boy, you have fought like a man, but you were over matched. Now I want to hear you speak like a man."

There was a moment of silence in which the spectators could hear only the heavy breathing of the boys and the singing and shouting of a band of celebrators at some distant point.

"Hope, let me shake your hand," said Porter after a little delay. "I take it back. You are not a coward, whatever else you may be."

They shook hands.

"I am a man pretty much like the rest of you and, I hope, a fairly good fellow," said Randall. "We are all fighting for what we think is right. If we had had a chance to talk it over we would not be trying to kill each other. We would have agreed as to what is right. When I was on my way here this evening, I heard a speaker saying that the Yankees were a lot of hogs and cowards. Don't you believe it. When they are well led you will find them as brave as you are. I do not say braver."

"Boy, you have won my respect," said the general as he shook Randall's hand. "Colonel O'Dowd, take him and his guard to your quarters and give him a good rubbing and see that he is well treated."

Randall went with the guard and Colonel O'Dowd to the latter's tent. There the young man stripped and Patrick gave him a thorough rubbing with a coarse towel.

"Aye, lad! Ye have gladdened the heart in me," said the Irishman as he worked. "Sure the Porter lad is a learnt boxer an' they thought the grit in ye would be comin' down like a ripe apple, the time ye'd be gittin' a clout or two from his fists. But God bless ye, boy! The way ye flattened the nose o' him an' the way ye druv the nails in him! Sure it was like me father puttin' shingles on a roof. Ye was the quick worker! Will ye tell me about Felix and his noble wife? Ah, she is the fine lady! They'll no be likin' it to hear o' me fightin' the governmint. But it's the way o' the Irish. There was no help for it at all, at all!"

"It is a war of separation—even brother from brother," said Randall. "What a pity!"

"Well, I think it'll soon be over."

"You are wrong. It will go on for years."

"God o' mercy! Do ye think it?"

"For years, until tens of thousands have perished and one side or the other is trampled into the dust. I think that the whole South will be laid waste. To-day's battle is the worst thing that could have happened. I hate to think of it."

"Me brave lad! Yer tongue is like a skittish colt on a tow string."

"The South has gained new confidence," Randall went on. "It will think the Yankees are all cowards. You know better. They are fighting men and there are millions of them. God has a plan and a long war is a part of it. But I would rather talk about Felix. If it were not for this war, he would be one of the happiest men alive."

They talked about Felix until taps sounded, which had been deferred an hour that evening, and Patrick promised to write to Nancy Thorn and tell her Randall was a prisoner, having proved himself a brave man.

At the sound of taps Colonel O'Dowd gave his young friend a blanket to make him comfortable, saying: "I'd rather be givin' ye me own bed, boy, an' go to the pen meself, but for the rules—sure they're hard on the Irish—an' may the good God give ye the peace o' sleep an' a kind thought o' me."

They parted; Randall to share the pen open to the sky with his fellow-prisoners. Fortunately the night was warm. He shared his blanket with a home-sick lad of seventeen who had been sickened by battle fright and over exertion. As he lay down and looked up at the stars, he thought how sad the face of Lincoln would be that night, and then came "the peace of sleep" and a pleasant dream of the little witch dwarf.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHICH IS THE STORY OF RANDALL'S LUCKY ESCAPE FROM LIBBY PRISON

RANDALL and his fellow prisoners were sent to Richmond—the Confederate capital—next day and put in prison, a long brick building where many were already confined and others were constantly arriving.

Among the treasures of a certain collector of historical documents is an amusing letter to Miss Nancy Thorn from Colonel Patrick O'Dowd, dated August 10, 1861. Its ink is faded and dim, but its fanciful humor and quaint and vivid narration, couched in bad grammar and worse orthography, write themselves upon the memory of the reader in unfading color. It will be printed in full by its owner in a volume of unpublished letters relating to the Civil War.

Only the substance of the colonel's letter may be presented here. In it he describes the valorous charge of Randall Hope and the small company of his despairing followers who were about to die. He tells of the capture and of the fight at the headquarters of the brigade and of the way Porter came down off the high horse he had been riding.

Until December, Randall was held in the dank Richmond prison, infested with vermin, on insufficient food. A war prison is apt to be, at best, a hell upon earth when bitter feeling against those who have been captured is running high and when a sufficient supply of wholesome food, even for those in the ranks, is obtained with difficulty. This prison was a deeper hell than most places of its kind. Its inmates were all in bad health. Many had died.

In the evening of the fourteenth of December Colonel O'Dowd, who had come with other officers to the Confederate War Department, called to see Randall. He had important news for the young man. Nancy and her mother were coming to Richmond to see him.

O'Dowd was astonished at the look of the young man. He was bearded, lean, pale and hollow-eyed—a shadow of his former self.

"Now put a smile on yer face, boy, an' let yer heart sing—she's comin'—Nancy an' her mother," said the jolly Irishman. "They'll see the wiltin' o' ye an' sure they'll no be lettin' ye stay here. The day afther tomorrow ye'll be eatin' beefsteak an' cakes an' pies an' the like o' that."

"I must not see them—I dare not see them," said Randall as he sank upon a bench and shook with emotion. For a moment neither spoke.

"Why should ye no want to see them?" the colonel asked.

"I am no longer a man—I am a lousy skeleton," Randall answered. "The temptation would be more than I could stand. I'd give up. I'd be thinking only of myself and her. The country could go to the devil."

"Don't be lettin' yerself down that way," said the kind-hearted Irishman. "Sure, I've got leave to take ye out for a feed. Come on now. The captain in command here is a boy o' me own rigiment. Come on, me brave lad."

They left the prison. In half a moment O'Dowd took off his great coat and said: "It's a cold night, boy. Put this on yer back. I have no the need o' it meself."

The young man refused the coat at first, but it was urged upon him. First they went to a barber shop where Randall enjoyed the luxury of a bath and a trimming of his hair and beard. Patrick had requested that he keep his whiskers. They went then to a restaurant where there was much singing and cheering in honor of the new Confederacy.

They had a table in a corner by themselves. Food was expensive in Richmond those days and only the wealthy could afford to pay a profit on their eating, so the place was not crowded.

"Kape the big coat on yer back while ye're fillin' yer belly," said Patrick O'Dowd. "Sure I think ye'll find it a protection for yer politics."

Randall knew that this remark proceeded from the noble politics of a gentle heart. The young man had a meal of which he speaks at length in his *Memories.* While he ate Patrick O'Dowd was playfully filling his great coat pocket with rolls and doughnuts. When the meal was finished the colonel said to the young man in a whisper:

"Now, we'll be lavin' here. I'll be axin' me way o' some one an' you be quick an' git out o' me sight in the crowd. In half an hour a train will be takin' troops to Manassas Junction. Ye'll go straight as a loon's leg to the right till ye come to the depot. In the pocket o' that coat ye'll be findin' a cap an' a compass an' money an' the papers o' Sergeant Dick Smith o' Company C, my rigiment. An' remember when ye're out o' me sight I'm not responsible fer yer conduct. Ye'll be no sooner aboard than ye fall asleep. The train'll be chuggin' into the junction afore sun-up. A bit this side o' there Dick Smith will jump off an' take to the bush an' may the good God help him on his way."

"The plan fitted the situation like a bolt in its hole," the young man writes. "Sergeant Smith was sick and off duty and his papers gave all the information I needed. Every lad in the car was asleep when we went on a side track three miles from Manassas Junction. I arose, picked up one of the rifles and a knapsack which lay in a corner of the car and left the train and made off in the darkness."

He crossed a field, heading northward and before sun-up found perfect cover in a timbered swamp where he spent the next day. He had an abundance of food, the knapsack being well provisioned. It held also a good supply of ammunition. With the food and the fresh air his strength and spirit were returning.

The next night he was walking on a lonely road when he came upon a runaway slave resting on a log, close by the roadside. The latter was asleep when Randall's foot touched his and awoke him. The negro was terribly frightened and began to beg for mercy.

"Keep quiet. Don't you dare speak above a whisper," said Randall. "What's the matter with you? I'm not going to kill you."

"Thank you, massa," the negro answered. "I'm tore down starved, massa. I ain't had nary bit to eat in three days."

Randall knew the truth about him then. The negro was a runaway slave.

"Well, come on with me and you can eat as you walk."

Randall gave him hardtack and doughnuts and rolls from his pocket and the negro said that his feet were sore and that he was of the mind to give himself up.

"I cain't run, massa," he explained. "Ef dey take a'ter me dis here niggah will sho' have to give up."

Randall whispered to him: "You may get through on a walk if you keep still. In case you are captured, tell them that you ran away to join Lee's army and are looking for headquarters. Don't run and take the chance of being shot. We may come to a line of pickets any time and if you keep still we may get through it is so dark. If you are captured, tell them you are alone and keep talking loud and don't move. If you let out that I am with you, I'll shoot you dead. Do you understand?"

The darky understood and registered a vow "befo' de Lord." The sky was overcast and the night as dark as a pocket. They had only the feel of the road beneath them to guide their steps. They had traveled half a mile or so and had come into the edge of a bit of woodland. Suddenly they were startled by the savage barking of a dog and a quick challenge at the roadside close behind them.

"Hyah I•be, massa! For de Lord's sake, hol' dat dog," the negro shouted and went on in a loud voice telling of his wish to join Massa Lee's army. The voice and the continued barking of the dog gave Randall a chance to steal away in the black darkness beyond them. Luck had favored him. The dog and the sentinel must have been dozing when the travelers passed, until suddenly the dog got their scent and awakened.

He tramped on until signs of dawn began to appear when he went into thick woods and cut a bed of cedar boughs and lay down under the great coat of Colonel O'Dowd and was soon asleep. The weather had turned cold and snow fell that morning and when he awoke, near the day's end, his coat was under an inch of snow.

He was chilly and his feet numb with cold so that he tramped up and down to warm himself. The sun was low and the sky clear. He consulted his compass and made his way to the edge of the woods for a look at the country across which he must travel. A road was near, going due east.

He waited until darkness fell and set out, and by and by got into the road. Soon he heard a horse and wagon coming behind him. He had just passed a small plantation house. In front of it the horse and wagon stopped. Then he overheard a loud conversation. The plantation owner announced that he was going through the lines early next morning with a load of hay for Wheeler's cavalry. That was thrilling news.

Randall had observed that a big load of hay was standing close by the roadside in front of the house. The rebel lines must be near if a man was going to drive beyond them with a load of hay. Undoubtedly the army of northern Virginia was planning an advance. He sat down in a clump of bushes by the roadside for more than an hour. By and by he returned to the load of hay. The lights were out in the house. He could hear no sound. He climbed to the top of the load, buried himself in the hay at the rear end of it and fell asleep.

He was awakened before daylight by the rattle of the neck-yoke and whiffle trees as the man was hitching on. The load started. Randall was approaching the last danger point in his journey. Soon he heard a trumpet blowing reveille and the sounds of an awakening camp. If he had walked a mile farther last night he would have come to serious trouble. The load stopped. Some one had halted them. What would happen now?

"I have a pass," the driver shouted. "Here it is."

There was a moment's delay. It was full of anxiety for the young man concealed near the top of the load. The destination of the hay might have been changed. In that case what would he do?

"Drive up to the cavalry headquarters straight ahead and wait for orders," was the shouted command.

Then Randall Hope spent one of the longest half-hours in his whole history. If captured he would be safe for a time with Dick Smith's papers in his pocket, but he would have to escape soon or he would be shot either as a deserter or a spy. At length the driver got his orders.

"This man will go with you down the Carrollton Pike and tell you where to put your hay."

"Don't take me too near the Yankee lines—I don't want to be captured," the driver demurred as his guide climbed to the top of the load.

"No danger—go ahead," the latter commanded.

The creaking wagon crept along for an hour or so and meanwhile their guide was telling the news of the war. The cowardly Yankees kept retreating and were afraid to fight. A big force was on its way from

Manassas Junction. When it arrived the cavalry would lead an advance on Washington.

Randall could have alighted anywhere then and have made his way safely to the Union lines, but he got the notion that he must take a captive or two with him.

"Now we're near the spot," said the guide after a spell of silence. "Here's good water for all the horses in the army. Stop about fifty feet beyond the bridge and throw your hay on the siding. I'll get down first and you can hand the rifles to me."

So Randall became aware that the men were armed. He had hoped for an escape without bloodshed or dangerous fighting. On the instant a new plan came to him. He slid off behind the load and set it afire. The two men, seeing the flames behind them, arose in a panic and went down the standard and unhitched the horses by pulling the king bolt. They had thrown their rifles into the ditch.

When they had moved their horses to a safe distance they turned and saw Randall with his rifle leveled at them.

"You will both walk on ahead of me straight down this road, if you please. Unhitch your tugs and do them up."

An hour later Randall entered the Union lines bringing with him two prisoners and a team of work horses and their harness.

He proved his identity through the colonel of his regiment who was in the big camp of the army of the Potomac now numbering 150,000 men. The white tents were spread far and wide over the heights and across the plain. He got leave to use the telegraph wires and found his friend Bates at the key in Washington. He had come on from Springfield to take charge of the Military Telegraph office at the capital. Randall sent a brief report to the president of his capture, imprisonment and escape and of his getting back to the Union lines. That evening the president answered as follows:

"We congratulate you and hope to see you soon at the White House. A. Lincoln.

CHAPTER XXIV

RANDALL FINDS A DISCOURAGING SITUATION AT THE CAPITAL

After two days of rest in the field hospital Randall went on to Washington arriving there about noon of a Sunday. The young man found his old friends—the Bateses—occupying the second floor of a comfortable house on Fourteenth Street. They spent an afternoon together, noisy with talk and laughter and exclamations of astonishment and sympathy. Randall had thrilled his friends with an account of his remarkable adventures in Baltimore and Charleston whereat Susy Bates registered the sanguinary vow that she would murder her aunt Elizabeth at the first opportunity. He proceeded with the story of his capture, imprisonment and escape. When he came to the point where he had refused to see Nancy and her mother, Susy Bates stopped him with a vigorous slap on his shoulder and with a shaking head and a fainting look exclaimed:

"Randall Hope! You have thrust a sword into my vitals." In a dying voice she added: "Bury me under the old oak in the valley."

"I had to make a choice between her and the Union cause. I didn't dare trust myself."

"Union cause! Fiddlesticks! What is that compared with a case of true love between a real hero and the queen of all women? I'd throw you up if I were she—upon my word, I would."

She threw her knitting work on the sofa with a look of exasperation saying: "Oh, you men! You make me so angry."

She went to the pantry and cooled her excitement with a drink of water.

"I wish that I could see her for about ten minutes," she remarked with a sigh as she returned. "I'm very much afraid that old Gustavus Adolphus will have her way and put us all to the sword."

"If she does I can not help it, but I do not think that she can," Randall answered. "There is a friend of mine in Richmond who will either see Nancy or write to her. She will not long be ignorant of my motive."

Susy prepared supper and while they were eating she and her husband told the news of Springfield. Hicks had enlisted and was in a training camp while Mrs. Hicks was running the farm. The mare Tyke and his dog Teaser were in fine condition. A man in Galena of the name of Grant—a West Point graduate, who had been running a tannery—had taken command of a local regiment and marched it to Cairo. Josiah Hope's oil ventures had failed and he had gone to buying horses for the army and was well paid and prosperous.

After supper Randall smoked a cigar with Bates and learned of the exasperating inactivity of the army.

"It's commander is a conceited little man from Ohio of the name of George B. McClellan," said Bates. "He has got 147,645 men and is yelling for more. He can not be induced to do anything with them. He is a joke. On the twenty-seventh of July he wrote a letter which said: 'By some strange operation of magic I seem to have become the power of the land.' Then he boasted publicly that he would crush the rebels with a blow. On the ninth of August this is his estimate of his own importance in a letter which found its way into print: 'I would cheerfully take the dictatorship and agree to lay down my life when the country is saved.' Gosh! how is that for modesty!

"In his talk he expresses contempt for the president and refers to him and the Cabinet as a lot of 'incapables.' He complains that they weary him with the deference they show him. He can barely tolerate this bunch of weaklings. Lincoln was out looking over the army one day with a friend of mine. He referred to it as 'McClellan's Body Guard' and that's all it has amounted to so far.

"The thing that ground me most happened on the thirteenth of November. When we first came here we were invited to stay with the president and his family at the White House until we could find a home. We spent four days with them. It was a wonderful experience. I went with the president on his evening rounds to the War and Navy Departments and the home of Secretary Seward.

"One evening we went from Seward's to McClellan's house on H Street. The general had gone to the wedding of an officer but would soon return. We waited an hour in the drawing-room while Mr. Lincoln was telling me of his life on the old circuit in Sangamon County. It was one of the most delightful hours in my life and I think that he enjoyed it as much as I did. McClellan returned. His orderly told him the president was waiting to see him. But the little general had no time to bother with presidents and affairs of state. A wedding was a different matter.

"He went up-stairs. We waited for him to come down. Mr. Lincoln, thinking that the general had misunderstood the words of the orderly, sent a servant to his room. The servant returned with the answer that General McClellan had gone to bed. What do you think of that?"

"What did the president think of it?" Randall asked with indignation.

"Just what he thought about it—nobody will ever know. Of course, it reminded him of a story but he didn't tell it. Probably its moral would have been it never pays to get mad at a fool because it doesn't do the fool any good and it wastes your energy. He smiled as he arose and threw his gray shawl over his shoulders and said: 'Well, Bates, I think it is time we went to bed.'

"He made only one remark as we walked to the White House. It was this: 'If he doesn't want to use the army, I would like to borrow it for a few days.'"

"A little man would have got mad," said Randall.

"Of course. He would have got all swelled up. I don't believe there's another man in the world who thinks as little of himself. His whole thought is for the country and his fellow-men. The abuse they hurl at him is like rotten eggs. Leading newspapers in the North and able senators demand his retirement. But he keeps his good nature and calmly clings to his purpose."

"He is like a mountain which is in the way of a lot of foolish people," Randall remarked. "They peck at him, but he stands unmoved. He doesn't fight back at them. If he did he would be in danger. His resentments never get in his way. If they do, he kicks them out of it. I wouldn't have believed that any human being could have such amazing humility."

Bates went on, "There's a lawyer of the name of Stanton out in Ohio who insulted Lincoln when he was a young man trying to make his way at the bar. Stanton ridiculed him as a 'long lank creature from Illinois, the back of whose linen duster was so soiled that it resembled a map of the continent.' Lincoln knew of that, and yet he is going to make him secretary of war and Cameron will step out. Stanton is Lincoln's opposite in make-up—cold, haughty, fat, domineering and critical. But I think that he is a kind of steam engine. Has lots of power and you've got to keep out of his way. He's the kind of man who will be able to handle McClellan. He dined at the White House one evening when we were there."

So Randall got all the news and gossip of the capital from this man who commanded the main avenue through which it traveled.

"The first Confederate commissioner who comes to this city is going to be seen by me and he'll have to take a letter across the lines to Nancy," Susy Bates said to Randall as he was leaving.

"Let me know when you find him, and we'll make it two letters," the young man answered.

He went to the White House. The president was in his office with General Butler, of Massachusetts, and wished him to come in.

"My son, I am glad to see you," said Mr. Lincoln as he took Randall's hand. "General Butler, here is the boy who with a handful of his comrades undertook to whip the whole rebel army. He escaped from Libby prison and here he is."

The young man was astonished that Mr. Lincoln seemed to know of that foolhardy adventure. The boy Tad was asleep on a rug near the feet of his father.

The general shook Randall's hand and said, "I wish that the whole army had run toward the enemy instead of taking the other direction."

"I was scared, too, but a little madder than scared," Randall explained. "For a minute I thought that the war was over and that it was my last chance to show that the Yankees were not all cowards."

The general, whose bald head reminded every artist of the antique busts of Roman emperors of the Augustan line, shook Randall's hand again, saying: "Boy, it was a noble resolution," and retired with a polite bow to the president.

"A reporter saw your charge," said Mr. Lincoln. "It really prevented his capture and enabled him to get away. He wrote about it in a New York newspaper. Tell me what happened."

The young man told of his capture, imprisonment and escape, omitting only the complicity of his friend, the colonel.

"Well done, my son," said the president. "Mrs. Lincoln will want to see you. I'll take Tad up to bed and tell her that you are here."

He lifted the sleeping boy tenderly in his arms and carried him up the stairway. "As he walked with the boy's head resting on his shoulder, I saw the real Abraham Lincoln," Randall writes. "He was above all a gentle father. He spoke of the army as 'my boys,' and the army had begun to call him 'Father Abraham.' If one of his boys was in need of mercy and forgiveness and there was any excuse for granting it, he did not ask in vain."

Soon a servant came down to conduct Randall to the family apartment. Mrs. Lincoln greeted him with a welcoming kiss and many kind words.

"You do not look well," she said as they sat down. "Your color is gone and you are very thin."

"Well, you see we had a hard time of it in prison and it was not an easy job to get back."

"Mr. Lincoln has been telling me about it. We lie awake nights thinking and talking of our poor boys who have to suffer such hardship. You did not see Nancy and her mother?"

"No."

"I was hoping that you would. I wrote a letter to them and gave it, open, to a Confederate commissioner to be mailed. He promised to see that it was delivered. In it I asked them to find you and get permission, if possible, to keep you in their home until you could be released by exchange."

Now, at last, Randall understood the proposed visit of Nancy and her mother to the prison at the Confederate capital.

"I heard that they were coming but there were reasons why I thought that I had better not see them."

A look of perplexity appeared upon the face of Mrs. Lincoln in the half moment of silence which followed his statement.

"You make me wonder at that," she remarked.

"Well, then I must tell you that Elizabeth Thorn promised that I could have Nancy if I would give up my politics and my outspoken hatred of slavery. It meant that I was to give up all that made me worth having. I couldn't do that, for it would have been no favor to Nancy. Frankly, in my condition I was a coward. I did not dare face her. It's easy to be brave on a full stomach, but when you have no foothold—"

He stopped. There was a solemn look in the faces of the president and Mrs. Lincoln.

"Father, this boy needs a rest," she said. "He ought not to go to work for a month or so."

"I think you are right, Mary," he answered. "My son, go home and go to bed, and let me know to-morrow where you would like to go for a rest and a holiday."

"I can tell you now that I wish to go to Illinois and ride my mare back. I have a notion that I would like to be in the cavalry service, and there she would be useful."

"You shall carry a despatch to Governor Yates and return at your convenience," said the president.

Randall arose to go. There was a thought in his mind of which he wished the president to know and yet he hesitated to express it. He stood for a second or two looking down at the hat in his hand. Then he remarked timidly:

"Mr. President, I wish that you could find a great general."

"My son, so do I," the president answered. "Thomas Jefferson once said: 'The Creator has not thought it proper to mark on the forehead those who are of the stuff to make great generals.' We think not of war. We are trained in the arts of peace. We have great farmers and great manufacturers and great inventors and mechanics, but we have no great generals. If we get one we shall have to make him."

Randall left the White House not in a cheerful mood. It was a gloomy and unpromising situation which he had found at the capital. On his way to his lodgings he entered the crowded corridor of Willard's Hotel to get information of the trains going north and west. To his astonishment a stranger approached him and said:

"This is Mr. Randall Hope of St. Lawrence County, I believe."

"It is," he answered.

"I am Thomas Barry of the *New York Herald.* I saw an account of your adventures in the *Tribune* and would like to have a talk with you."

"I shall be glad to talk with you, but not for publication," said Randall. "I don't want to be advertised. I'm only a common soldier and not a very well trained one. Nor am I a man of any importance."

They sat down together and Randall modestly and briefly answered a number of questions. In a few moments Barry said:

"I was talking with Mr. George Bancroft this evening. He had been reading about you and spoke of you as the typical Yankee soldier that we are soon to see. Would you care to meet him?"

Randall blushed as he answered: "Of course, I want to meet him but—but I hope that you are not making fun of me."

Barry looked at him and laughed as he said: "My boy, I wish that all the common soldiers were as uncommon as you are. Come, I know that Mr. Bancroft would like to meet you."

There was a reassuring note in the voice of the young Irish correspondent. They found Mr. Bancroft sitting by an open wood fire in his room. His hair and long full beard were white, his eyes keen and gray, his nose aquiline, his face alive with interest. He took Randall's hand and spoke a gracious word of welcome.

"You boys of the Adirondack country have kept your feet in the soil and are like a big pine," he remarked. "A storm does not frighten you. We are all closely related to the forest. That's why we love it. Its breath is like mother's milk to us. As we get away from it, our strength begins to fade. My brave lad, how are you?"

"I am fairly well, thank you, sir; but most unhappy," Randall answered. "Our men are streaming down from the north, but they are falling into weak hands. We have no able general to lead them."

"Suppose we had a great captain and were able to overwhelm the Confederate armies quickly," Mr. Bancroft began, "we should save the Union but no greater purpose would be accomplished. We should still be on the old level. No stumbling block would have been put out of our way. In this matter we have a greater captain to deal with than any who wears the sword and epaulets. He is Divine Providence. Civil War is the instrument with which he will root out social slavery and increase the number of free states. His purpose is the welfare of man. We have not yet put ourselves in full harmony with that purpose. Until we do we shall make little progress and troubles and even disasters will fall upon us."

"It is a pity that, meanwhile, many lives must be sacrificed," Randall answered.

"It is the way and the only way men have of paying for the evils they have created," Mr. Bancroft added. "The student of history becomes aware that death is an incident in life of slight importance in the view of the greater Captain."

The interview ended, and Randall went to his lodgings filled with a new vision of the war. The conceited general whose brain was so engaged with illusive dreams of his own grandeur that it had little time for other occupations and the unyielding man of honor in the presidential chair had become a part of the prodigious plan. It was evident that the stage was set for a great drama.

CHAPTER XXV

RANDALL RETURNS TO SPRINGFIELD

RANDALL set out next day on his trip to Illinois with messages to Governor Yates. He slept through most of the journey and arrived in Springfield refreshed and eager to meet his friends. He had notified Mr. Hicks by telegraph of his coming and that gentleman met him at the train in uniform.

"Hello, Mr. Hicks," Randall called, as he saw him on the platform.

"Corporal Hicks," his friend answered with a look of dignity. "I've been a plain mister as long as I can stand it. You may say Corp Hicks, if you want to, but don't Mister me. I'm 'way beyond that. Come on. I've got a leave of absence for two days and there ain't a minute to lose."

He seized Randall's grip and led him to a team and wagon hitched to a fence near the station. There he turned and surveyed Randall from head to foot.

"By the lord Harry, boy!" he exclaimed. "You look like a cake o' soap at the end of a wash day."

"And I feel like the lady who has done the washing," Randall answered.

"Hold up your head," said Hicks to the near horse, as he removed the halter. "Don't ye know how to behave in the presence of a corporal?"

They drove first to the capitol where Randall delivered his bundle of papers to the governor and got a cheering report on the situation in the West. Volunteers were streaming in. A large force was in training in Cairo. The youthful and optimistic West had no doubt of the outcome. From the state-house they proceeded to the home of Randall's aunt and uncle.

"Your Uncle 'Josire' has broke my heart," said Corporal Hicks as they were on their way. "When I go there he sets and reads pomes out loud an' says, 'Ain't that wonderful?' I agree with him, but I swear it's like sawin' wood to hear him tear it off by the hour. He's made an awful liar out o' me. You go in an' stay as long as ye like; I'm goin' to set in the wagon. I'm safe here. You tell him I can't trust these hosses alone."

"How is he getting along?" Randall asked.

"Well, sir, he was doin' well buyin' hosses. Got some money ahead I guess. He put it all in timber lands in the North an' begun to feel so rich that he retired from business to figger out what he was goin' to do with his money. He'd set in a chair all day, down to the Globe tavern, talkin' with folks 'bout the lumber business an' sayin' portry. His brain is full of it.

"When I was a boy I had my pockets full of stuns to throw at birds and squirrels. He has his pockets full o' portry an' if you ain't darn careful, he'll bring ye down."

They laughed a moment. Then Hicks went on: "At first the loafin' come hard on him. He wasn't in practise. Had to get kind o' limbered up. He stuck to it. Got the liver complaint an' had a spell o' sickness. He couldn't stan' the struggle o' holdin' down a chair all day an' it was even worse for his family. Had to knock off an' take a rest. So he's back on the road ag'in buyin' hosses. But I guess he's hum today. He knows you're comin'."

They had reached the small cottage of Josiah Hope. Randall got out of the wagon. As he did so Teaser jumped from the little veranda barking. Randall called to him. The dog came bounding to his side. Then followed a moment of joyous and affectionate greeting between the dog and master of which the young man loved to tell in proof of his claim that dogs have memories.

Josiah Hope was sitting by the fireside with a volume of Cowper's poems. Mrs. Hope was in the kitchen at work. The children were in school, save the oldest son, who was at work in a store "learning the mercantile business"—Josiah Hope explained. The latter was the same dignified, calm, well dressed gentleman of old; Mrs. Hope the same shabby, care-worn drudge. Uncle Josiah asked about Abe Lincoln and his favorite statesman, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, cherishing, as he did, the proud illusion that the Hopes were related to the Sumners. He thought that the war would soon end and pooh-poohed Randall's idea that it would last for years.

"How about your oil ventures?" the young man asked presently.

"Still hanging fire," Uncle Josiah answered, being never willing to confess that they were as dead as Julius Cæsar. "We have lately invested in timber lands that promise quick returns. Think of our rapidly growing cities. Lumber is in even greater demand than oil. My lands are within a hundred miles of Chicago."

"Don't sell them. Prices are going up," said Randall.

"I expect to sell them to-day at a handsome profit," his uncle answered.

"War has come. It will continue for years. Building material will increase in value. How many acres in the tract?"

"I have an option on ten thousand acres. The pine and spruce stand so thick you couldn't swing a cat by the tail in it. I can take a profit of two thousand five hundred dollars."

"At last good luck has come to you; don't let go of it," Randall answered. "You have jabbed your crowbar into a pot of gold. If you must sell perhaps I'll buy the option."

"I need the money or I wouldn't sell. Any man who can hold it will make a fortune. My lawyer is

Mr. William Herndon. Go and talk with him about it. My price is three thousand dollars. I have always felt an interest in you. If you want it, you may have it at twenty-seven hundred and fifty—just to help you along. Did you ever read what Cowper says about family affection?"

He opened the book he had put down a few moments before and read a long passage.

The passage being finished, Randall arose and said:

"I'll go and see Mr. Herndon. I remember him well."

"Won't you stay to dinner?" Uncle Josiah asked.

"Sorry, but I must hurry along. Going out to Mrs. Thorn's farm with Corporal Hicks to get my mare. I shall start for Washington to-morrow, in the saddle, with Tyke and Teaser. It will be a leisurely ride in good company and somewhere on the way I hope to find the health and high spirits that I used to enjoy."

"You be lookin' kind o' scrawny," his aunt remarked. "Please tell us what has happened to you."

He could not get away until he had given them a part of his later history, but he touched only the main points and very lightly and swiftly.

When at length he resumed his seat in the wagon at the side of Corporal Hicks, the latter said:

"Any portry flyin' around in there?"

"Yes, he read a long piece by Cowper."

"Gosh!" Hicks exclaimed. "I'd rather a man would try to swat me with a club. Maybe you could dodge it and run. Anyway the trouble would end quicker. Ye can't dodge them pomes o' his. Ye have to set an' take 'em an' be friendly an' pretend to like it. I tell ye that'll ruin a man quicker than drink. No more fer me."

They drove to Mr. Herndon's office and learned that about a year before two real estate sharpers from Chicago had got acquainted with Josiah Hope and sold him an option, then utterly worthless, on ten thousand acres of timber land in Wisconsin. A miracle had happened. The midwestern cities were having a phenomenal growth. Everything was going up. The option had become valuable. The sharpers were now trying to buy it back. What its value might be Herndon was unable to say, but he had no doubt that Josiah Hope, whose need of money was pressing, would accept the profit offered within twenty-four hours.

As a result of the interview Randall and his friend agreed to pay in cash to Josiah Hope the sum he demanded for his option; namely, three thousand dollars. Mr. Hicks had agreed to advance the money needed and Randall was to get his share of it as soon as possible from his grandfather. A contract was drawn and signed that morning between the buyers and the poor gambler, Josiah Hope, who, for once in his life, had thrown the dice and made a considerable winning. So the successful partnership of Hope and Hicks began. That evening the real estate men drove out to the Thorn farm and offered the new partnership five thousand dollars for its bargain. They learned that the option was not for sale.

Randall had found Tyke in excellent condition. Hicks had given her good care and light work in the saddle. Since Sumter was fired upon neither the corporal nor his wife had heard a word from Mrs. Thorn. It was hard to get help and Mrs. Hicks' father and young nephew, who had come to live with them, would do what they could to keep the farm up.

The next morning Randall set out on his long journey with Tyke and Teaser. The mare and dog had recognized each other. The latter ran ahead and back and around the mare, plainly urging her with a joyous outcry to quicken her pace. She watched him with interest, shaking her head, in a short threatening jump, as he came near. "Don't be in a hurry, my little friend," she seemed to say. "I'll give you enough running before we get there."

Randall was also in better spirits than he had known since he had marched out of Washington with his regiment toward the disaster of Bull Run. The feeling had come to him that he was now a responsible American citizen—of what degree Hicks would presently ascertain.

He rode to the Hope cottage in Springfield. Uncle Josiah's new wealth had increased his dignity. He had bought new furniture and was giving kindly but imperious orders to his wife and two men who were placing it. He had also bought a new cane with a head of ivory and gold. He had a special fondness for canes. Each cane in his collection celebrated a new store of imaginary riches.

Randall went to his uncle's side and said: "Uncle, I hope that I may have as good luck as you in getting a wife."

"She is a wonderful woman. And at last she has acquired confidence in my judgment."

"Is that all?" Randall asked. "In my opinion, it is not enough. She ought to have at least a third of your profit. She had to take a share of your losses and keep the home going and the children covered through hard times. It is now your duty to give her a share of your profit."

The delicate feelings of Uncle Josiah had been wounded. He assumed a look of deep injury and made no answer.

"If I make any profit in this venture, I'm going to give her a share of it," Randall went on. "Uncle, it has galled me to find you always looking like a gentleman and her looking like a drudge. It isn't right."

Uncle Josiah gave the young man an indignant glare and said: "That, sir, is a piece of ungrateful impudence."

"But it is a fact, sir," Randall went on. "If it hurts you to know it, I am sorry; but the truth is you are the only man in Springfield who doesn't know it."

He kissed his aunt, waved a farewell to his uncle and hurried away. Of his journey through Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland he has left little information. He found the spirit of the people "like boiling water" and the weather too cold for comfort and now and then so stormy that he lay by for better conditions. He headed for Cincinnati where he had a long rest in "the pleasant home of my dear friends, Felix and Phyllis O'Dowd. The Lord had blessed their marriage with a child—a little blond-haired, dark-eyed baby boy."

"Oh, me sweet lad!" said Felix when Randall was conducted to the library where the beloved Irishman sat with his wife. "This many a day the thought o' ye has been heavier on me heart than all me sins. We're just after gettin' a letter from Nancy an' may the holy saints protect her. It has had a weary flight over land an' sea in search o' us. Sure, this long time, I think, the little witch dwarf has been settin' at the feet o' her with his head in his hands. It'll be many a day since ye've put yer eye on him."

"So it is," said Randall.

"He's that busy with her, he's not the time for a look at ye. He must kape the sweet hope in her—sure he must—for she's nigh kilt with her troubles, God bless her! Sure, when we read the letter, we got a kick in our hearts an' prayed for yer peace in Heaven."

Felix gave the letter mailed in Havana to the young man who read as follows:

My dear, dear friends: Randall was captured in the battle of Bull Run and taken to a prison in Richmond. My mother and I went to see him to do what we could for his comfort, only to find that he had escaped. We were in the Confederate capital long enough to learn that he had been shot and killed on his way to Washington by a sentinel. In his coat pocket were old letters addressed to Randall Hope and the portrait of a schoolgirl which was probably the one that I gave him. The newspapers said that he was the man known in a part of Beauregard's army as the Yankee Devil because he had fought so desperately when he was captured. My heart is broken. But I have seen the little witch dwarf in my dreams and he will not be sad with me. He rings his bells and has the wistful, happy look of old. I wonder if Randall is really living and if some other man was wearing his coat. Will you try to find out and get word to me somehow? I am living in a dark unfriendly world and my candle is out. My hope is that you may be able to light it for me if the good God should bring this letter to your hands, as I pray He will.

Please send your answer to

Henry A. McCarter
Hotel Calderon
Havana
Cuba

unless you know of a quicker and surer way of reaching me.

Randall explained to Mr. and Mrs. O'Dowd that he had loaned his coat to a sickly comrade who had none and who had been suffering from the cold dank atmosphere of the prison. This comrade probably had escaped soon after the disappearance of Randall and been shot in trying to pass the Confederate lines.

The young man wrote a long letter to Nancy that day and sent it to Mr. McCarter to be forwarded as soon as possible. He says in his *Memories,* "I doubt if a more eloquent love letter was ever written. I said in a note to McCarter that my letter to Miss Thorn was unsealed and that perhaps it would be his duty to read it. If so and he had ever loved a fair maid he would, I was sure, do what he could to help the letter on its way."

He told the O'Dowds how life had gone with him; of his meeting Patrick and of the latter's kindness in Richmond which had had the relish of salvation in it, and of Mr. Lincoln's holding out against all discouragement as immovable as the apostles of Christ when the threats of Rome were sounding in their ears. He even feared that the life of the president was in danger.

Then Felix, the thinking man and scholar, spoke out like a prophet in words that Randall was never to forget: "The devil has many lovers. The man who thrusts his sword in the belly of a great evil an' fills the world with its death cry will be struck down. Aye, it's the way o' us. It's no a strange thing that the beloved o' God should be hated by the devil."

When Felix learned that Patrick was an officer in the Confederate army and had heard of his great kindness to the young man, he looked sorrowful but presently he smiled and said:

"Sure, it's never in the heart o' the Irish to be idle when there is a chance to fight or to do an act o' kindness—God knows. The feel o' danger is like bread an' meat to them."

From Michael O'Connor, genial nephew of Mrs. O'Dowd, Randall got news of Abner Pert, the fighting man with whom the boy from Hopkinton had had a desperate encounter across the Rhine in Cincinnati.

"He has got to be quite a man since you gave him a clouting," said Michael. "He has joined the young Catholic Brotherhood and is a Lincoln man. He wants to go to Washington and get into the cavalry under Gregg whom he knows."

"If he comes there, tell him to look me up," said Randall, who had left his address with Felix O'Dowd.

The tenth day of that visit Randall resumed his journey, and was back to his normal weight and condition when he reached Washington in the early spring of 1862. At his lodgings he found a letter from Hicks informing him that a bank draft had arrived from Joshua Hope and that he had been offered thirty thousand dollars for their option.

"This gave me," he writes, "a welcome feeling of independence. I sent another letter to Nancy telling her of my good luck. It would be enough to give us a fair start in life when the little witch dwarf had brought us together again.

"As our option had a year to run I advised Hicks not to sell, but to put the matter in Herndon's hands with authority to act when he thought best."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE GREAT ADVENTURE OF RANDALL HOPE IN HAMPTON ROADS

After he had reached the capital, Randall found quarters for Tyke and Teaser in a livery stable near his lodgings. It was a warm sunny day. The grassed spaces were turning green. A grateful odor of the warming earth was in the air. Robins were singing as if their world had no troubles like those which afflicted the hearts of men.

An affectionate letter from his grandfather, to whom he had written in Cincinnati, enclosed a draft for five hundred dollars.

"It cleans up that money in the Potsdam bank and I'll sleep better when I know you've got it," the old man wrote. "We have a good hired girl and your mother is as chipper as a sparrow. Ezry has raised the wages of his help and acts as if he had a better opinion of himself and other folks. He speaks to us every time he comes in the house and I guess he's found out that it pays."

Randall went to a bank with the draft and then to the White House.

"They admitted me to the president's office without delay," he writes.

"Mr. Lincoln was talking with a bald headed gentleman from Philadelphia who had won the distinction of being the greatest bore that came to the White House. He was apt to stay long and talk too much. When I entered, the president gave him a pleasant word of dismissal and turned to me. Still the man did not go.

" 'My son, you look like a colt that has been turned out to grass all summer,' Mr. Lincoln said to me.

"The disappointments and responsibilities of his place had worn him thin. His face was sad. I felt like crying when I saw it."

The president went to a wardrobe in a corner of the office and took a bottle from its shelf and handed it to the bald man from Philadelphia asking:

"Did you ever try this stuff on your head?"

"No, sir, I never did," the man answered.

"Well, I advise you to try it," said the president. "I will give you the bottle. If at first you don't succeed, try again. Keep it up. They say it will put hair on a pumpkin. Come back in eight or ten months and tell me how it works."

A delegation from Buffalo was announced.

"Bring them in at once and take this gentleman to the east room and show him the paintings," said the president.

So before the delegation entered the man from Philadelphia was disposed of. Randall was requested to remain. The gentlemen from Buffalo entered and each was introduced to the president. In the beginning of his remarks the spokesman said:

"Mr. President, up our way we believe in God and Abraham Lincoln."

"My friend, you are more than half right," Mr. Lincoln answered with a smile.

In his answer the president touched a new note which forecast a change of policy.

"Gentlemen, Mr. Emerson has said that if the Union is incapable of securing universal freedom for its people, its disruption were as the breaking up of a frog pond. I begin to think that he is right. Being a humble instrument in the hands of our heavenly Father I shall try to work out His purpose. I have sought His aid. But if after endeavoring to do my best in the light He gives me, I find my efforts failing, I must believe that my purpose is not yet in full harmony with His. If I had had my way this war would never have begun. It has begun and it continues, and we must believe that He who made the world still governs it."

Thus, guardedly, the Surrendered Soul had spoken. The keen intellect of the young man had felt the undercurrent of suggestion in his words. Were the chains of slavery to be forever broken?

Mr. Lincoln had offered to the South a plan of gradual and compensated emancipation. That plan had been scoffed at and rejected even by a state so far north as little Delaware. Had he set his mind upon a bolder policy?

When the delegation had retired the president said to Randall, "A government transport will be leaving for Newport News this afternoon at four. I wish you to go up there on the transport as my telegrapher and await orders. Meanwhile, if anything important happens, sit down at the end of our wire and let me know about it as promptly as possible. I'll give you a line to the secretary of the navy who will do what he can for your comfort. You may see a great battle. The Confederates have built a ship which is like a giant crocodile under a hide of iron, they tell me. It is liable to attack us any day now."

Randall went to the Navy Department that morning with a note to Mr. Gideon Welles—a large, kindly, white-bearded man who sat at his desk with a gray shawl around his shoulders. He spoke a word of greeting, wrote the desired pass and made an entry in his famous note-book. Then he said, "My boy, you are fortunate in being the friend of Mr. Lincoln."

Randall answered, "He is everybody's friend, but he knows me and I know him. I have seen many of the big men. Mr. Lincoln stands above them all, I think. His soul is bigger than his body."

"Some one has said," Mr. Welles remarked as he studied his note-book, "some one has said that great men are not isolated peaks, but that they are the summits of mountain ranges. There is one that always lifts his head above the others."

After a moment of silence the secretary added, "I suggest that you step over to the War Department and get a pass from Mr. Stanton also. It may be a help to you as you will be using a military wire."

Randall hastened to the War Department with a brief line to the secretary from Mr. Welles, and a grateful sense of the noble calm and fatherly dignity of the latter. Mr. Stanton was different. He sat at his desk stroking his long beard streaked with white hairs, as he studied a map. He seemed to resent the interruption. He looked at the note of Mr. Welles through gold rimmed spectacles and then sternly at Randall. His brow was wrinkled, his eyes keen and gray.

"What do you want?" he demanded bruskly.

"I am a telegrapher going to Newport News on the president's order and Mr. Welles suggested that I get a pass from you."

"I will not give it, sir," the secretary answered. "I will not give it," he repeated, "without a direct request from the president."

He resumed his study of the map on the table. The young man said that he would soon return with the pass, but the secretary did not answer. He had no time for politeness.

Randall hurried to the White House and got to Mr. Lincoln's side after waiting half an hour or so. Hastily the president scribbled an order on the back of an envelope and gave it to the young man.

"Hand that to Mars," he said with a smile.

"It's a good name for him," Randall answered as he turned away.

He got his pass from Mr. Stanton and sailed on the transport at four o'clock. He arrived at Newport News on Friday, March 7, 1862. Three Union frigates lay at anchor under the guns of Fort Monroe. One of them was the *Cumberland*. He remembered that his friends Michael O'Connor and Fritz Roemer were in service on this ship. That evening an officer of the fort sent him out to her on a government tender. Commander Marston of the big fighting ship received him hospitably.

"This is not the safest place in the world," said the commander. "We shall do our best to make you comfortable, but if the Confederate fleet arrives it will do its best to make you uncomfortable."

"I am not looking for safety but for a chance to see what is going on."

He had a long visit with his friend Michael O'Connor after supper. Fritz Roemer, who had become expert in handling the big guns, was not then aboard.

"He is in Newport News for the night," said Michael. "He wants to see you and has been trying to get leave to go to Washington and look you up."

The tender was to return for Randall at twelve o'clock the next day. Half an hour before that time the guns of the fort had announced the coming of the enemy. The decks of the *Cumberland* were immediately cleared for action. In the midst of this bustle of preparation Fritz arrived.

"This is no place for you, old man," said the latter. "If I had known you were here I would have had the tender that brought me take you ashore. It is too late now. She is a mile away."

"Don't worry about me. I want to see this fight," Randall answered. "Give me a rifle and a sword and maybe I can help a little."

"I have a letter to you from Nancy," said Fritz. "I guess it's important. It came with a letter from Désirée. I am afraid that Nancy will marry Porter if she does not hear from you before long. Your letter is below in my box. I'll run down and get it."

The words were scarcely spoken when an order came to man the guns.

With his glasses Randall saw the new devil ship of the Confederacy called the *Merrimac*. She resembled a huge crocodile. She was headed straight for the *Cumberland,* the sea foaming under her nose. Her hull was mostly under water. Her great rounded, iron covered back had sloping sides like those of a giant tortoise. The guns of the *Cumberland* opened fire. Their balls splashed around the crocodile ship and drummed on her iron roof, glancing into the air and then plunging downward.

Fritz came to Randall and shouted into his ear, "We can't stop her and she's going to ram us. The commander orders you to leave the ship. We've lowered a small boat. Go down the rope quick and pull out of range."

Randall lost no time in obeying this order. He lowered himself to the boat and was pulling off when a shot from the *Merrimac* carried away the mainmast and a splinter of it was buried in his shoulder. Another fell near his boat and drenched and almost swamped him in a splash of water. He kept the oars working and was soon out of range. Fortunately the sea was quiet. He shipped his oars and bailed with his hat. Then he stood up and saw a thing the like of which had never been seen—the most astonishing monster in all history. It was an annex of hell spouting flames and hurling quick death and destruction from behind an impenetrable armour.

On that little stage, smitten by its thunderbolts, he beheld a display of stark heroism fit only for immortal moments. The men of the *Cumberland* were being cut down at their guns and the ship was settling beneath them. Still they gave broadside for broadside, shot for shot. When the forward magazine was drowned, they were passing up powder from the one aft. Her last gun was fired when water was flowing into the muzzle of the one beside it.

He envied those men who were giving their all for the great purpose. They were on that last high stage of life, above fear, where men see that death is a thing no more to be considered than a night's sleep. The spirit of Randall had climbed up with them.

It was not the news from Nancy or battle madness which prompted the thing he did. It was some force quite beyond his comprehension. It was born of his fighting spirit and his sense of helplessness and exasperation. He turned his boat and rowed as fast as he could toward the doomed ship. The enemy was close upon her and still firing. The notion had come to him that he must reach that pit of hell in time to go down with his friends. He hurried like a moth flying into flames.

He was not ten rods from the sinking *Cumberland* when the iron nose of the crocodile monster crashed into her hull, and drove her back upon her anchors. The gallant ship went down in fifty feet of water with her dead and wounded and many of the brave men who had defended her and had clung to their posts in spite of orders to save themselves if they could.

Another victim was in sight and the giant crocodile headed toward her like an unsatisfied hawk who has eaten a partridge and, unharmed, is pursuing the rest of the brood.

Randall stood up and waved his hands at her and shouted in his frenzy: "Why don't you kill me—you damned rebel beast! What have I done that you should leave me here?"

In a moment the tide had swept him to the spot where the ship had stood. A great silence had fallen upon that grave in the sea like a benediction, or so it seemed to him. There must have been many sounds in the air, but the tortured ears of the young man did not hear them. They were like the chirping of crickets in a still night. The waters, lately rent and churned by cannon-balls and the down plunge of the ship, were now smooth and covered with foam and bubbles, gently tossing, and bits of wreckage.

Suddenly Randall discovered that the water a little beyond him was alive with men, some swimming, some shouting for help. He rowed in among them and seized the hands of those in trouble and, one after another, pulled them into his boat. Other boats, which Randall in his excitement had not observed, were also picking up the men whom the ship had suddenly abandoned. Two tenders were drawing near. They took every one aboard and set out for the fort.

Randall stood with tears flowing down his cheeks for he had learned that his friends Fritz and Michael were not among the rescued. For them the war had ended. The letter from Nancy had gone down with them into that deep inviolable grave.

An officer touched his arm gently and said, "My dear fellow, you are wounded. You have an arrow in your flesh."

It was then that Randall first began to feel the pain in his shoulder, and to discover that the clothing on his back was wet with his own blood. There were surgeons on the tenders and one of them removed the splinter and dressed his wound. Again the sound of the big guns was rushing over the water plane and bellowing on the shores.

"She has attacked the *Congress*," some one was saying as the tenders landed.

That evening Randall, weak and sore, sat down at the telegraph key and poured his story of the battle upon the wire. It flowed through his friend Bates into the chamber where the Cabinet was in session. He concluded his report with these words: "As I send this message I can see the flames above the burning *Congress.* It looks as if the iron monster would destroy the whole brood of Union ships in this harbor."

It was then that Secretary Stanton made his famous remark chronicled in the faithful note-book of Mr. Welles, that a shell from the *Merrimac* would probably land in the Cabinet room before they separated.

While Randall had been working on the wire a craft as new and strange in appearance as the *Merrimac* had arrived from New York and been seen in the light of the burning *Congress.* It was Ericsson's *Monitor.*

The next morning the *Merrimac* steamed toward the *Minnesota,* another Union frigate, to finish her work. No one now doubted her ability to sweep the Union flag from those waters. Suddenly the *Monitor* came out to meet her. She too was an iron-hided crocodile, but much smaller than the *Merrimac.* Her flat deck was only a foot or so above water. Her guns were discharged through a round revolving turret which looked like "a cheese box on a raft." Compared with the *Merrimac* she was like David facing Goliath.

The rebel crocodile had four times the displacement of the Yankee craft and five times as many guns. But her great draft of twenty-two feet confined her to deep water, while the *Monitor,* drawing only ten feet, could run where she pleased. She took the shots as if they were only hailstones, and circled around her sluggish foe in the fashion of a wasp stabbing its enemy.

Each moved without injury in a driving blast of iron that made the sea boil around them. The consumption of coal and ammunition on the *Merrimac* had lifted her sides above water. On them her hide was only an inch thick. She was in danger of destruction and had begun to show her heels. She had had enough and ran into the Elizabeth River, completely out-crocodiled and no longer a thing to be feared.

Randall hastened to the wire and conveyed the good news to his master, but he knew not that he had seen a battle which was to revolutionize the naval warfare of the world.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MAN WHO COULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED OR TURNED FROM HIS GREAT PURPOSE

RANDALL was weak and sadly in need of repairs when he returned to Washington. He arrived in the evening and, feeling ill, got into a cab and drove to the home of his friends Susy and Stephen Bates. There he broke down and went to bed. A doctor was summoned who said that he must have rest and careful nursing.

To Susy Bates, hardened to news of death and disaster, no detail in the sanguinary battle of Hampton Roads was quite so harrowing as the loss of the unread letter from Nancy Thorn.

When Randall had finished his story of the battle she said, "God knows I feel for those poor men but the letter! the letter! Oh, lord!"

She threw herself on the sofa as she groaned, "Stephen, please hit my head with an ax and bury me under the old oak in the valley."

The president and Mrs. Lincoln came to see the young man next day.

"We have learned of all your troubles," said the lady.

"And of your bravery and faithful service, my son," the president added, as he leaned over and touched the brow of Randall with his lips. "You and I must be careful not to get discouraged. We have much to do."

Randall was never to forget that sentence: "You and I must be careful not to get discouraged." What a gentle and comforting rebuke was in it! How like the president, sad and worn with many cares, to try to restore the soul of his young friend with a merry thought before leaving.

"I am not discouraged," Randall had said. "After what I have seen I am convinced we shall win the war."

"I heard a good story about myself the other day," said Mr. Lincoln. "Two Quaker ladies were traveling on the railroad and were discussing the war.

" 'I think that Jefferson Davis will succeed,' said one of them.

" 'Why does thee think so?' the other asked.

" 'Because he is a praying man.'

" 'So is Abraham Lincoln.'

" 'Yes, but the Lord will think that Abraham is joking.' "

Mr. Lincoln laughed heartily and added, "I am going to have you moved to a hospital where you will get the best of care."

"Don't worry," said Mrs. Lincoln as they were leaving. "We shall do what we can to make you well and happy."

On the president's order Randall was moved next day to the Soldier's Home, where for some three weeks he was under treatment for blood loss and physical exhaustion. On his recovery he went into the military telegraph service in the War Department under Colonel Stager and General Eckert.

Mr. Lincoln spent many hours in the office. Sometimes, when a battle was on, he was there through the night. In cool weather he invariably wore a gray plaid shawl over his shoulders. On entering the telegraph office he hung it over the screen door leading to Stanton's room. Then, always, he went to a drawer where the messages were deposited and read them carefully. When he had reached those which he had seen before he was wont to say:

"Well, boys, I'm down to raisins."

This was a quotation from one of his stories regarding a man who, when he had lost his job on account of misbehavior, lived on raisins until he had got to work again.

One evening he came in and asked, "Well, boys, what's the news?"

"There's no news to-night, sir," Randall answered.

"No news is good news except when you go fishing," the president remarked as he went to the drawer.

When he returned to the White House late at night, General Eckert—a big strong man—or Randall Hope went with Mr. Lincoln to defend him if necessary.

The powers in Europe were in sympathy with the South. Unable to find a pretext for a direct attack upon the Lincoln government they were moving on its right flank, the sister republic of Mexico, through the French king. Confederate cruisers were being built and equipped in English ports to destroy the commerce of the United States.

McClellan, stripped of his power, had been succeeded by Pope. A tactless and boastful address, when he assumed command, had embittered his officers in the army of the Potomac. It was largely because of tardy cooperation that he had suffered a great disaster in the second battle of Bull Run and was left in a perilous situation, more or less enjoyed, it would appear, by certain men in the upper ranks of his army.

Mr. Horace Greeley, with his far-sounding harp, now led a great and growing chorus of pacifists in the North. The note of fury was in its demand for peace.

Mr. Lincoln was wont to say of them, "They would have me prosecute the war with elder-stalk squirts charged with rosewater."

The difficulties which beset the president were increasing. The president's enemies in Congress—led by Senators Wade, Chandler, Grimes and Trumbull, and Representative Henry Winter Davis, known as the Vindictives and sometimes called the Jacobin Club—were seeking to take out of his hands the management of the war. They proposed, in effect, that it should be conducted by a joint committee of both Houses. Such a committee was appointed.

The Jacobins referred to the White House as "the throne of despotic power at the other end of the avenue." The question arose, "Is Congress the Master of the President?" Mr. Stevens had declared that the exceptional problems of war which can not be prepared for by legislation, can be solved only by the temporary creation of a dictator. This was the view of Mr. Lincoln.

Fate, his most powerful friends, and even the Republican Party which he had helped to create, seemed to be against him. The sky was black with political ferocity and the wind blowing from all sides. There was mutiny in the crew and the officers were muttering. Still the lonely man at the helm of the ship held his course.

It happened that old Mr. Favel and his daughter and granddaughter were captured with their yacht at sea. Their captain had cipher messages from an official of the Confederate War Department to one Jacob Thompson in Montreal relating to a plot to burn New York. The Vindictives insisted that the prisoners should be shot as traitors—that the only good Confederate was a dead one.

Randall went to see the president regarding the unfortunate plight of his good friends. He reminded Mr. Lincoln of the kindly hospitality he had received from them in Charleston. The president had not forgotten Mr. Favel's loyalty or his efforts to prevent the war. As a result of this interview the prisoners were brought to Washington from Fort Monroe. Randall was sitting with the president and Secretary Welles when the fine old southern gentleman and Mrs. Fontane and Désirée arrived at the White House.

Randall writes: "The ladies were handsomely dressed. Désirée was as graceful and beautiful as a white swan in still water, but she was sad, having learned the fate of her lover."

The young man met them at the office door and was greeted with exclamations of astonishment.

"You dear Yankee boy!" Mrs. Fontane exclaimed with tears in her eyes as she kissed him. "I thought that you were dead."

"I was never more alive," the young man answered.

Then he presented these friends of his to Mr. Lincoln.

"Mr. President, I am glad to be back under the old flag," said Mr. Favel.

He rolled his shining cane between his hands and thighs as he was speaking. When he mentioned the ladies in his late adventure, he chuckled.

He went on in quite a serious mood: "My loyalty to the Union flag has never wavered. From the beginning, as my young friend here can tell you, I have been opposed to the Confederate movement. It can not succeed. It ought not to succeed. As God is my witness, I was not aware of the messages that were found in the possession of my captain. He may be in league with the politicians—of that I do not know—but I am innocent.

"I had no other purpose in going to Canada than to find a point where it would be possible for my granddaughter to communicate with her lover in the Union army, and to spend the summer there. I let these ladies do as they like with me. They have kept my pot boiling with the fire of romance. Egad, sir, I think that they wanted to be captured by the Yankees. The ladies are a clever lot. Ha! Ha! To them there is nothing like love and lovers. Egad, sir, I have some taste for them myself."

The president was smiling.

"The war has interrupted many a pretty romance," he began. "It has separated two beautiful lovers, the North and the South. I speak for many when I say that I love the South with a fervency which its treason has not extinguished. I am tempted constantly to say in behalf of my brothers of the South: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' I have pleaded with the Senate not to consider them public enemies, but insurgent citizens only."

Mrs. Fontane arose and bowed her head before him and said: "Oh, sir, it is good to know you and to look into your face."

There was no comelier woman of her age in America.

"Well, in the matter of looking the advantage is on my side," the president answered with a smile.

Turning to Mr. Favel he said: "I wonder that your yacht was not seized by the Confederate government."

"I sent her to Bermuda when the war began. We took an English ship and joined her there."

"Do English ships get in and out of southern ports?" the president asked.

"Yes, sir, and they bring guns and ammunition."

Mr. Lincoln retired from the room with Secretary Welles, saying that he would return in a few minutes. Then it was that Randall told Désirée of the sinking of the *Cumberland*. She was deeply moved by the story, and sat with her face covered with her hands when the president and his naval secretary returned.

"You may leave the captain and crew in our charge and go on your way," said Mr. Lincoln. "We will give you a captain and crew to take your ship to Montreal. You are to deliver the papers to Jacob Thompson and of course say nothing of your capture and detention. I assume that you will be glad to help us to lay our hands on the men who would try to commit a crime so infamous."

"Egad, sir, I shall do all I can to help you bring them to punishment," the old gentleman answered.

Désirée arose and said in a broken voice to the president, "My lover is dead. If you do not mind, sir, I would like to stay near where he lies and do what I can for his comrades."

"My girl, I feel for you," said Mr. Lincoln, taking her hand. "You and your mother may stay in Washington if you wish to, and will promise to hold no communication with the enemy."

Having promised this they retired, now released from custody, and Randall took the ladies and the old gentleman to Willard's Hotel to dinner. When they were seated in a small private dining-room Randall said:

"Now please tell me all about Nancy. Don't hide a thing from me."

"I never saw a girl so hit with love in my life," Mrs. Fontane began. "She will have it that you are the one and only man in the world for her. We women of forty are not so foolish. We know that the sea is full of good fish, and that if we lose one the thing to do is bait again and try for another.

"Still, I think that the world would not be half so interesting if it were not for the desperation of young lovers. Of course it is the opposition of her mother which has made the girl so determined to have you. We always want the thing we can not have."

"Tell me more about Nancy," the young man urged.

"She is well but we have all been thinking that she was crazy," the lady went on. "Honestly, I thought that the girl was losing her mind. The report came from Richmond that you were dead. The body of an escaped prisoner shot by a sentinel had been identified as yours. But she would have it that you were not dead. She had information from some fairy creature, she called it a witch dwarf, that you were living. The witch dwarf was right. *We* were all crazy."

"But has she not promised to marry Porter?" Randall asked.

"She told me that she would marry him as soon as she was really sure that you had left this world. The danger is that he may succeed in convincing her that you are a dead lover. He is very cunning. But I have a plan."

"You will not drag me into any more of your sentimental plans, old girl," said Mr. Favel with a smile. "You would risk your neck for the sake of a wedding."

"Well, why not?" she asked. "My neck is not such an important thing after all."

"My girl, you lie awake nights worrying about the people who are not married," said the old gentleman.

"True, and I shall have enough of it to do," said the lady, as she turned and looked toward her daughter who had sat in deep depression, now and then wiping her eyes. "You men have no notion of the responsibilities of a mother."

Mr. Favel took the hand of his granddaughter in his and said, "I don't want any man to steal this girl from me. I am her lover."

"Oh, you men!" Mrs. Fontane exclaimed with a sigh. "You lack good sense. I must tell you, Mr. Hope, that my father and I are not of a mind on many subjects."

"But you and I agree that you are a very clever lady. Ha, ha!" the old gentleman laughed. "Egad, my boy, you watch her! She is a great general."

"My conceit was not acquired. It was an inheritance," the lady answered. "I would not have you misunderstand me, Mr. Hope. We are a divided family. My daughter and I are Confederates—real rebels. Our hearts are with the South. We make an exception of you but we are Yankee haters."

"Oh, you ladies!" Mr. Favel exclaimed. "What a lot of humbugs you are! You hate the Yankees and every one you get acquainted with becomes an exception. The baron was an exception, and now Mr. Lincoln himself is the greatest exception of all."

"He was a surprise to me," said Mrs. Fontane. "I never met a gentler, kindlier man. He does not hate the South."

"He loves the South," Randall declared. "He will have no reprisals. He will be quick to forgive when the war ends and to do what he can to repair the damage. The hatred, north and south, is only tongue-deep and all due to a lack of knowledge."

"But I have heard awful stories of Yankee cruelty to our wounded men on the battle-field," said Mrs. Fontane with a look of incredulity.

"We hear the same kind of thing," Randall answered. "Wherever there is war there will be cruelty, but the stories of it are bound to be exaggerated."

"Of course they're mostly rubbish," said the old gentleman. "Infuriated men on both sides are bad enough, God knows."

Their dinner over, Mr. Favel engaged rooms for himself and the ladies until the following day, when the government transport which had brought them was to return with the wealthy planter to Fort Monroe.

That night a committee from the Jacobin Club visited the president to insist on the punishment of Mr. Favel and the imprisonment of every man and woman found on the yacht.

Some account of this outburst came over the wire that night and in view of the feeling it was likely to create, Randall sent a messenger to his southern friends with a note, urging them to go aboard the transport immediately.

"You should all go on this cruise to Canada," he added. "You can return to Washington at your convenience after a month or so. I will see that passes which will let you across the border are sent in care of our consul at Montreal. Sorry I can not go to help you, and to say, instead of writing, *au revoir.*"

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FORGIVING OF ABNER PERT

THE army was disorganized after the misfortunes of the able but ill-fated Pope. He was sent to the west, and Lincoln, to the dismay of his friends, reinstated McClellan. The latter had undoubted talent for organization. Moreover he had won the affection and confidence of officers and men. It was the only thing to do and Lincoln did it, raising a storm of protest.

One day of that midsummer clouded with evil tidings Randall went to the White House to tell the president that he had decided to resign his position in the telegraph service.

"What does this mean?" Mr. Lincoln asked.

"I have found a cripple who can do my work as well as I can," Randall answered. "He is a fellow with one leg. The time has come when every man who can fight ought to be fighting. I want to go into the cavalry service."

The president closed his eyes and there was a slight shaking of his head. His face wore a look that lived always in the heart of the boy.

"My son," he said, "I hate to think of you going out to the gates of hell again. But after all it is good that you should do so. May God go with you."

There was a moment in which neither spoke. Then the president added, "I shall give you an inspiring memory to take with you. The Cabinet met this morning. I presented a proclamation emancipating all the slaves. I tell you this in confidence, but it will be made public soon. Now I feel that we are really on the Lord's side."

Their talk was interrupted by the boy Tad. He entered abruptly and began to tell in much excitement of a woman outside in the corridor whose children were starving because their father was shut up in prison.

"Well, son, I will look into the matter as soon as I can," said Mr. Lincoln.

The boy clung to his father's knees begging that the man be set free. Tad was allowed to bring the woman into the office. She was a pathetic figure. Mr. Lincoln questioned her. Her husband was Abner Pert of Gregg's cavalry. He was confined for insubordination and his pay had been stopped.

"I know that man," said Randall. "He is a crude. rough Ohio river-man. My friend Michael O'Connor who went down in the *Cumberland* spoke well of him."

Mr. Lincoln put his arm around his little son and turning to the woman said: "You have an eloquent pleader here. If it is possible I shall give you back your husband, but first I must see Mr. Stanton about it."

The woman was on her knees with tears flowing down her cheeks.

"This isn't fair," said the president. "If you do not stop and go away you will get me to crying. Take this and leave your name and address with the door-keeper."

He gave the woman some money and she went away. Mr. Lincoln got his hat and cane and said to Randall:

"I will go with you to Stanton's office and we will kill two birds with one stone."

They found Mars in ill humor. The president called for the papers relating to Abner Pert. They were brought and he read them carefully.

"It seems that he told his superior officer to go to hell," said Mr. Lincoln. "I have often thought that there were officers in the army who needed that advice."

"But they should not be getting it from a private soldier, sir," Stanton answered.

"He is a rough wild colt not yet broken to military discipline," said the president. "You may not know that I was one of the great commanders in the Black Hawk War. Every man under me was an Abner Pert. They were good fellows but often they were advertising hell as the correct destination of those who displeased them. I think that this man has had all the punishment that is necessary. I wish him to be reproved and reinstated."

"I can not do it, sir," the secretary answered with a frown. "You would have me ruin the discipline in the army."

Mr. Lincoln sat upon a sofa with his legs crossed and answered in a positive tone: "Mr. Secretary, I reckon that you will have to obey my order."

Stanton replied with feeling: "Mr. President, it is an improper order. I can not do it."

Lincoln leaned forward and looked straight into the eyes of his war secretary and said in a firm tone: "Mr. Secretary, it will have to be done."

Mr. Stanton learned that day that he had a master. The matter of Randall's enlistment in the cavalry was taken up and the details quickly arranged. He and his mare were to go into training in the Tenth Regiment of Gregg's Brigade on the following Friday.

McClellan's time for drilling his recovered army was brief. Lee had crossed the Potomac into Maryland.

The president had ordered his chief commander to find and hurt the enemy as quickly as possible. It was the second week of September, 1862. The general's habit of timid procrastination ruined a great opportunity. He made no movement while the ragged legions of Lee were streaming in from across the Potomac to take strong positions.

The authorities agree that Lee would have been defeated if the Union army had moved a day earlier. The battle of Antietam began on the seventeenth—a day of failure, of brutal and unnecessary slaughter. The northern army lost 2,010 killed, and more than 10,000 wounded, and all confidence in its commander.

With a force superior to the enemy in number and equipment he had achieved only a fearful loss. Again the McClellan bubble had burst. After the failure of the Wilderness campaign Mr. Lincoln directed him on the fifth of November to turn over his command to Burnside and report to Trenton, New Jersey, for further orders.

One morning there had been a beating of drums, a blowing of bugles and a firing of guns that voiced a tidal wave of new-born hope rushing across the continent. In all the camps from the Potomac to the Mississippi and in countless cities and villages, the soul of the North caught the valiant spirit of the martyr as it sang:

John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
But his soul goes marching on.

Randall knew the import of all this. It announced the coming of that fulness of time of which Mr. Emerson had spoken. On every lip was the news that a Proclamation of Emancipation had been issued. It reawakened the flagging enthusiasm of the North. It silenced the chorus of pacifists. For a time it won the favor of Congress. The hostile voices in the halls of legislation were hushed while the small intellects behind them were taking counsel together.

Thereafter Lincoln had a gift of power and vision above that of other men. The Surrendered Soul had begun the making of a fame which was to loom like a great tower on the misty far-reaching plain of the ages.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DARKEST HOURS OF THE WAR

Randall Hope was in a training camp for nearly five months. Abner Pert, a member of his regiment, became his most devoted friend in the army. Since his reinstatement the rough river-man had won the respect of his officers and comrades. A Kentucky mountaineer, his early life had been largely spent in the saddle. He was the most expert horseman in his regiment. Gregg's men had had a part in one slight engagement with the enemy, wherein Abner had distinguished himself for dare-devil bravery which had resulted in the capture of twenty Confederates.

Mrs. Fontane and her daughter had returned to Washington and one morning in early May had driven out to see Randall at the camp.

The young man writes: "Désirée brought me a beautiful bouquet of roses and looked very charming as she put them in my hand. She blushed a little when she said that they were given for Nancy."

"Have you heard from her?" he asked eagerly.

"I do not need to hear from her to know what she would wish me to do," the girl answered.

"We would love to bring you something better than roses if we only knew what you need," said Mrs. Fontane. "We left my father in New York and just now we have no man to do for."

"Well, I need many things, new socks and underclothes and a light jacket. But I am a rich man now, and you must let me pay the bills."

He read aloud to them a letter from Hicks informing him that Herndon had sold the option for one hundred thousand dollars and that half that sum, less the lawyer's fee, had been deposited to Randall's credit in the leading bank of Springfield.

Mrs. Fontane took his right hand in both of hers and said, "Dear boy, I congratulate you. This is great news. Gustavus Adolphus has been shooting long enough at your poverty. Her favorite argument has been that you were too poor to support a wife."

While they were talking Abner Pert came along and was introduced to the ladies. Abner, who feared nothing except ladies, took off his hat and nodded.

"How do you do?" Mrs. Fontane asked.

Abner had a protruding cheek due to the pressure of a quid of tobacco about the size of a buckeye. He shifted its position a little and answered: "Quite well, I thank ye."

He was a lank raw-boned man nearly six feet tall, broad at the shoulders and a bit stooped. He was thirty-two years old. There was a cat-like alertness in his look and manner. His blue eyes and prominent ears were alert. His bristling, sandy eyebrows and mustache were as alert as a cat's whiskers. The trait had come of an ancient feud in which for generations his family had been involved.

"This is a man without fear and the best horseman in the regiment," said Randall. "Abner is almost sure to be captured in our first battle. He is too reckless."

Abner Pert stood still and surveyed the ladies thoughtfully but made no answer. He looked as if he feared that one or the other of them would draw a weapon.

"He is just the man I want to know," Mrs. Fontane remarked. "Mr. Pert, are you not willing to talk to me?"

"My tongue is an unruly colt, ma'am," he answered.

"I suppose you mean that no woman can drive it," said the madam with a smile. "I only wish to say that if you are captured I'll make it worth your while to do me a favor if you can. I want to send a letter to a lady in Atlanta. I'll give a thousand dollars to any man who can deliver it or cause it to be delivered before June first."

Abner seized the bait. "I'll be honest with ye, ma'am," he said, as if it were not his habit. "That suits me eggzact. I'm your hoss. It is a plum severe job o' lyin', but I begun to play that fiddle when I was knee high. My brothers and sisters is scattered all down through the Great Smokys. If I kin keep my guts in till I'm up in the high tops, I reckon I'd make it, ma'am. Gi' me the back o' my mare an' I kin lose any bull pup that ever straddled a hoss. She kin kick the nails out o' her shoes when she gits a goin', ma'am, an' she kin jump rocks er logs er ditches er fences. As long as there's a hole in the air above 'em she'll slip through it."

The above is an expurgated version of Abner's remarks as reported in the *Memories.* They amply warranted his distrust of his own tongue for polite conversation.

Randall turned to the astonished Mrs. Fontane and said, "You mustn't try to rob us of our best soldier. Abner is a fighting man and we need him."

"One man more or less will make no difference in this silly war, but he may defeat the plan of Gustavus Adolphus."

Randall laughed as he quoted: "There is nothing like love and lovers and egad! I have some interest in them myself."

"Let me tell you, one drop of love is better than all this hateful war. I've set out to see you married and if it's possible, young man, I'm going to do it."

She gave her card to Abner and asked him to get a day off to come and see her. She turned to Randall and added, "All I ask of you is that you wire me when he is coming."

Randall, by faithful and efficient service, had won a commission as captain. He was so absorbed with his work that he thought no more of the matter until Abner announced that he was going to the city to see Mrs. Fontane.

"That money is like a woodpecker on a tree," he said. "Keeps diggin' into me. I cain't sleep. 'Pears like I've got maggots in my brain. I hears 'em gnawin' nights."

"I'll telegraph her," said the captain, "but I warn you that you are here only for the purpose of fighting. If you were deliberately to seek to be captured it would disgrace you, and I can tell you that a rebel prison is hell."

Abner disclaimed any such purpose. "I'll fight honest," he said. "But if I git tuck they'll have to keep me hog-tied er I'll lose 'em and make fer the far tops. If I git thar I'll go down the high ridge sure as hell-fire an' come back for the money. I've saved my ole carcuss afore now with a few quick jumps. An' I've hid in the brush till my tongue swelled fer water. Ye'd sooner find the nest of a potteridge."

They had their first engagement when their horses' feet were deep in blossoming fields. It was early May. The army of the Potomac under Hooker in seven corps was ranged along the Rappahannock opposite Fredericksburg—132,000 men of which 13,000 were cavalry under Gregg, Custer and Pleasanton. It was a vast camp.

The battle of Chancellorsville began. Randall and Abner were near the point of a flying wedge flung at the charging columns of the enemy. The collision was a stern adventure—every man of ten thousand yelling like a demon and many of them tumbling, with their mouths open, to the valley of death. It split and scattered the gray host.

Then the tide turned. One of the great astonishments of war had come to pass. A big force of the Union army in a remote part of the field was calmly eating its supper. Stonewall Jackson and his men, who had swiftly advanced, unobserved, in the shelter of a great forest, fell upon it.

The Union men, smitten "with their mouths full of meat," as it were, fled in wild confusion. A part of the Federal cavalry division was caught in the angle between Jackson's troops and the charging horsemen of Stuart. The enemy was like an upper and a nether millstone. A part of the Union cavalry was quickly cut off and ground into fragments.

In the whirling mêlée Randall rallied a force of his men that broke a small arc in the circle and caught up with its fleeing comrades.

That night three thousand men were missing and among them was Abner Pert. His great adventure with its background of promised riches, had perhaps begun.

Again Randall had escaped with slight injuries—a saber-slash on his right cheek and a grazed thigh. Tyke had also come through with only a cut on her neck.

There was a loud muttering in the Union camps that night. Those men who had stopped to feed their bellies had been warned of their peril but their commander would not believe it. Had stupid leadership again defeated the great purpose and led to the unnecessary loss of thousands?

That evening Randall got Bates on the wire and asked him to report his wish to come to Washington for a short talk with the president. He had discovered a lack of confidence in the army and had his opinion as to the cause of it. He had decided to lay it before Mr. Lincoln. He was summoned to the capital that night and arrived there late the next day.

An evening paper announced that the Jacobin Club in the House and Senate was again denouncing the president in terms more bitter than they had ever before dared to use. The darkest hour in the history of the Republic had arrived.

He had his supper and went to the War Department for a word with Bates. The president was not coming over that evening. He had asked that a copy of every message be promptly despatched to his office. Randall went to the White House and was taken up to the private apartment.

Mr. Lincoln sat with a book in his lap and Tad stood beside him. He had been reading to the boy and answering his queries. One side of Randall's face was almost covered with a plaster. Mr. Lincoln put aside his book and took the boy's hand in both of his and pressed it warmly.

"My son!" he said and stopped. He would have said more but could not. Through a short moment the men stood looking at each other and neither spoke. They sat down in a silence broken by the voice of the little boy as he pleaded:

"Give me one more ride, father—just one."

"I'm tired to-night, son. I'll walk once down the hall with you and back," said the president as he swung the boy to his shoulders.

Mrs. Lincoln, who sat under a shaded lamp with her knitting, came and kissed the young soldier.

"I shall tell you, before you go, of a talk I had to-day with Mrs. Fontane," she said. "The lady is rich and is spending some of her money for your sake and Nancy's."

Randall sat down with the president and began his story.

"I am very young to be coming here and finding fault with the conduct of men older in years and experience than I am," he apologized. "But I have thought it my duty to report to you my own impressions and those of better men whose number is beyond counting."

Then he told of the surprise due either to incapacity or indifference, and of the feeling among officers and men that General Meade should be in command.

For a few ticks of the clock neither spoke, then the president:

"It is a dark hour but I think that a change is coming. We have a great captain looming up in the West."

"Grant?" Randall asked.

"Yes, Unconditional Surrender Grant. I wish you to sit down in Hay's room and put your report in writing. I want to talk with Stanton about it and other matters. Pleasanton has reported your bravery in action. I propose that it shall be recognized."

Randall went to the secretary's room and sat down at a desk and began his writing. Soon Mrs. Lincoln came to him and said that Mrs. Fontane had equipped two soldiers with clothing which had money concealed in it to help them to get to Atlanta with a letter, in case the fortunes of war should make it possible for them to try their luck on such a mission.

"One of them I know, and he has been captured," said Randall. "If any one can do it he can."

Randall and young Mr. Hay were at work in the office until three in the morning. Soon after one o'clock Mr. Hay whispered: "Do you hear the chief walking in the corridor?"

Randall had long heard the slow measured steps beyond the door.

"I hear him walking at night always, when we have had news of a great disaster," said Hay. "They are all his boys in the army, you know."

About two o'clock Mr. Lincoln entered the office in his night clothes with a telegram in his hand. He said:

"Boys, a Confederate prisoner reports that Stonewall Jackson was terribly wounded by shots from his own men and that he can not live. That may be a result of inestimable value to the Union cause. He was a great soldier."

"It may be that Chancellorsville is worth all it cost," Mr. Hay answered.

"Boys, I think that we had better saw it off and call it a day," said the president. "I find that it's not a good idea to forget to go to bed."

He left the young men, gently closing the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXX

THE LAST GREAT ADVENTURE OF RANDALL AND TYKE AND CERTAIN SENTIMENTAL RESULTS

An old letter from Randall Hope to his mother, dated June 28, 1863, says:

"I have a sore heart these days. Teaser, who had lived in my tent with me for months, has been missing since Chancellorsville. I fear that he went out to look for me and got in the great mix-up. If so there's no telling what adventure he may have had. Tyke is in fine condition. We expect soon, God help us, to be face to face with Lee's army. Meade is now in command, I am glad to tell you.

"Two wonderful women are in the field hospital-service—Mrs. Fontane, a southern lady—and her daughter Désirée. They are brave and noble women. The last day at Chancellorsville they were out on the field before the firing ceased, giving aid and comfort to the wounded. They are captured Confederates whose sympathies are with the South, but they have heart enough to feel for a man in trouble no matter where he was born. The daughter is a beautiful girl of about my own age—dark eyes, blonde hair, erect, full figure—whose lover went down with the *Cumber-*

land. He was a northern boy—Fritz Roemer—you have heard me speak of him. His death naturally broadened their sympathies and their conduct has broadened mine. I am beginning to think that the soul of the South is as noble as the soul of the North. It is only misguided."

The North had had a lighter heart since Grant's capture of Vicksburg with thirty thousand men on the eighteenth of May. Then, in the first three days of July, came the mighty struggle with Lee's army around and between the high ridges of Gettysburg—a mile or so apart and battlemented with towers and boulders. The men in Meade's army, when it had taken its position, knew that in the fair meadows and grainfields and orchards below them, was to come the great adventure which would decide the fate of a nation. They knew not, however, that it was to be one of the bloodiest battles thus far recorded in human history.

Randall fought in Gregg's corps. His regiment had had a part only in one easy skirmish until the third day of the great battle. Then, soon after two o'clock, Randall and Tyke were in a flying mass of ten thousand men and horses scurrying toward the Union right to meet the full force of Stuart's cavalry which was trying to encircle it.

The ground shook under the feet of their horses and the racketing of the great guns. Such a tumult of cannon and rifle firing had never vexed the air. The great charge of Longstreet's men was under way.

The hour had struck which was to be a turning point in human history. The quivering earth seemed to feel the mighty fulness of each passing moment.

Later in that fateful day Union cavalry flung itself upon the advancing foe. What a slashing of sabers, what a cracking of carbines, what a tumbling of man and horse in that swift collision!

The men of Gregg crumpled the sturdy line of Stuart and lagged in desperate fighting and rode on to his rear ranks. The parted enemy was set upon by the brigade of Custer. Hurrah! The able and thus far unbeaten horsemen of Stuart had been turned and were fleeing. Many were captured. The Union men reformed and charged, again and again, taking many prisoners.

In one of these charges Tyke began to show weakness. Her pace slowed. She fell to her knees and then recovered her feet. Something had happened to her. Randall was about to dismount when a like thing happened to him. It was a ball from a carbine in the hands of a fallen Confederate. The young captain tumbled to the ground. He lay stunned by the bullet shock. When he awoke he had no inclination to rise. He felt tired and sleepy as he had often felt in his young boyhood after a hard day in the woods, when he had come home and thrown himself on the lounge. He closed his eyes and slept. Meanwhile Nature in her own merciful way had stopped the wasting of his blood.

It was the muzzle of Tyke which awakened him as it had often done. He looked up at the mare. Her nose was against his cheek. She was groaning and trembling. He must help her. He caught her mane in his fingers and tried to pull himself up. She braced to lift him as she had been wont to do in the old home pasture.

The strength which had always been so quick to serve him was gone. He could not get on his feet. He was numb and helpless. The mare turned away. He could hear her rolling on the ground near him. He called to her but she did not come. What was the meaning of the silence? Had the battle ended? He could see a star in the sky. Night was falling.

Désirée Fontane was out looking for him. In the early twilight she was searching among the prostrate men not yet picked up by the overworked hospital corps. She came upon the dead body of Tyke and recognized it. Near it she found the young captain where he had fallen asleep. He had been dreaming of the little witch dwarf and had heard a beautiful fairy voice calling "Father! Father!" Then he heard Désirée.

"My beloved! My hero! My sweetheart!" the girl was saying as he awoke and looked up into her tearful eyes. She was kneeling beside him. She kissed his cold lips. Her voice trembled as she said:

"Oh! I am glad to see your eyes open."

"Is this—is this Nancy?" Randall asked.

"No. It is only Désirée Fontane," the girl answered mournfully.

"Désirée! Of course! I knew who you were. Why did I say Nancy?"

She gave him milk and whisky, and arose and called to the litter-bearers who were then arriving at that part of the strewn and tortured earth. A field surgeon came with a litter and two men.

"He is Captain Hope of Gregg's cavalry," she said.

The surgeon examined his wound.

"A ball entered near the spinal column and broke through the shoulder," he said. "He lay so that the pressure of his weight helped to close the arteries, or he would be dead. Take him up to the hospital."

"How about the battle?" Randall asked.

"It is a great victory. Lee is gone."

A faint hurrah came from the litter.

The young captain called Désirée to his side and whispered, brokenly: "Tyke is dead. I heard her when she was dying. I want you to see that she is decently buried. I don't care what it costs."

On their way to the hospital they heard distant voices singing:

The many stars in heaven are kindly looking down,
The many stars in heaven are kindly looking down,
The many stars in heaven are kindly looking down
On the grave of old John Brown.
  Glory, glory, halleluia, glory, glory, halleluia.
  Glory, glory, halleluia, on the grave of old John Brown.

His soul is now a-marching in the army of the Lord,
His soul is now a-marching in the army of the Lord,
His soul is now a-marching in the army of the Lord,
As we go marching on.

Désirée Fontane was at the bedside of the young man in the field and at the hospital in Chambersburg until his wound healed. His left arm had been amputated. His recovery was slow on account of bone injuries. The girl and her mother and Mr. Favel went with him to Washington on the twenty-sixth of November. Grant had stormed Lookout Mountain and carried the heights of Missionary Ridge. There was no longer any doubt of the outcome of the war.

His friends went to his humble lodgings with him.

"This will not do for you. We must find a better place," said the good lady.

"I can afford it now," Randall answered.

"Désirée and I will find good lodgings and fix them up for you," said Mrs. Fontane. "We shall love to do it."

He had never felt so lonely in his life as when they left him. Soon he put on his hat and overcoat and walked to the White House. As he neared its entrance he heard a sharp command in a child's voice:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

Suddenly he discovered Tad standing by the door with a wooden gun in his hands. "The chartered libertine of the White House," as Mr. Hay was wont to describe him, had organized the servants into a guard and was stopping every caller.

"Friend with the countersign," Randall answered.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign," the child sentinel sternly demanded.

The captain advanced and leaning over whispered in the boy's ear "Randall Hope." Tad dropped his gun and his dignity and threw his arms around the neck of the leaning soldier and kissed him. He ran ahead of Randall, as the latter entered the house, and dodged the doorkeeper and broke into the president's room with the glad words:

"Father! Randall Hope is here."

The captain heard the answer of the president: "That's good news, my son. Tell him that I will see him in a few minutes."

Randall sat down. The boy ran back saying: "Father will see you in a few minutes."

He stood beside the captain and curiously felt his empty sleeve.

"I cried when I heard that Tyke was killed," the boy whispered. "I felt sorry for you, too. Did it hurt much?"

A number of Cabinet members were leaving the president's room. Mr. Lincoln came with them. His face, now deeply lined, had a cheerful look. It was like the face Randall had known in Springfield, but how worn and aged!

"Gentlemen, here is one of the four men left who were in the front rank that broke through Stuart's cavalry," said the president.

The distinguished secretaries shook the young man's hand and said pleasant things to him.

"I have been looking forward to the time when I could take your hand and thank you and congratulate you," said Stanton. "Your country will not forget you."

Randall was astonished by all this but did not lose his poise.

"I did only what I was commanded to do, and if you knew how scared I was you would not try to make a hero of me," he answered—and his answer was often quoted by the famous war secretary.

The president put his arm around the young man as they went into the office. The boy Tad went with them. They sat down. The little hero-worshipper climbed to the arm of Randall's chair and sat silently and soberly looking into his face. It was a scarred face—marked by a saber-thrust, a speeding bullet and by pain and hardship. Mr. Lincoln sat with his hands and elbows resting on the cushioned chair-arms. The melancholy look had returned. For a moment nothing was said. Then Mr. Lincoln:

"My son, how you have changed! It is a man's face you have now—a nobler face than the one I saw when you left me. How are you?"

"I feel as strong as ever," the young man answered.

"What can I say but this—'Well done, good and faithful servant.' "

"Mr. President, I want to go back to my regiment," said the young captain. "I love to be with the boys and I am still able to lead a charge."

The president shook his head.

"Colonel Hope, I can not agree to that," he answered, thus announcing his promotion.

The young man bowed and thanked him.

"You have won promotion and medals of honor and been pretty well slashed and trimmed," Mr. Lincoln went on. "It's time you learned to behave."

The president was interrupted by an outburst of laughter from his little son.

He smiled and continued: "Mrs. Lincoln and I had a talk about you last evening. She said that if you went into another battle there would not be enough left of you for a girl to marry. She was right. I'm going to put you in a safe place. We owe it to Nancy. If she doesn't hold out there are others."

"Nancy!" Randall exclaimed. "I have sometimes imagined that I was fighting for Nancy. It has been hard to keep my hope alive."

"At least we must keep your body alive and give Nancy a chance after all this waiting. If you only had legs like those of John Breakiron you could be trusted in the army. He served in the Mexican War and was always running the wrong way in time of trouble. John used to say that he had the heart of a lion but a cowardly pair of legs."

Randall joined in the merry laughter of the boy Tad.

"As your legs can not be trusted to save you, I'll have to do it," the president went on. "I am making a place for you in the War Department. Mrs. Lincoln will be asking you to dine and spend the evening with us soon. We want to have a visit with you."

Randall went to his work in the War Department as an assistant of Mr. Stanton. One evening he dined with his old friends, Susy and Stephen Bates. He told them of the stirring battle scene he had witnessed. He did not forget to tell of the work of mercy which Mrs. Fontane and her daughter had done at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. When he had finished Susy leaned forward and said with glowing eyes looking straight at Randall:

"They've got you hooked and I'll bet that they are going to land you."

"What do you mean?" Randall asked.

"That Désirée is in love with you and that Adele Fontane has her hand on the line. Talk about strategy! Lord! Compared with the Favel cousins Lee is a bungler."

"Oh, I think that you are wrong," the colonel answered. "Désirée and her mother have had a high motive. They have done noble work. I have had a chance to know about that."

"I agree with you," said Susy. "I know women. If I loved a man I could be as brave and noble as the case required. If they have won you they have done it fairly. I wouldn't blame you a bit if you married Désirée. She is a sweet and beautiful girl."

"I have no such intention," said Randall.

Susy went on: "If Nancy Thorn is fool enough to marry Porter under any circumstances she deserves to lose what she loses and to get what she gets. He did the darndest, meanest thing that any man can do. When he met Nancy he calmly chucked Désirée overboard. He was engaged to her and Elizabeth Thorn knew it. Gosh! When I'm pounding the steak I like to imagine that it's Andrew Porter's head. I do it thoroughly then and it doesn't tire me a bit."

"I have pounded Porter's head myself," Randall remarked with a laugh. "I can assure you that it tired me. He is a born fighter and I am bound to say that he took his beating like a gentleman."

"Old Lizzie Thorn thought him a great catch and began her maneuvers," said Susy as she arose and threw herself on the sofa, with a sigh. "The women! Lord! What a lot of Thurlow Weeds they are! Tell me what is your opinion of Désirée?"

She lay with her elbow on a cushion, her hand buried in her blonde curls, her shrewd roguish eyes looking up at Randall. She was one of the keenest detectives in the secret service of romance.

"What do I think of her?" the colonel began like a pressed witness on the stand, but he answered gallantly: "Why I think that she is one of the sweetest, dearest girls in the world."

Susy's head fell back upon the cushions, "Stephen!" she gasped. "This is the beginning of the end. Heavens! Who would have thought it? Bury me under the old oak in the valley."

Randall arose with a laugh and threw a blanket over her. Turning to his friend Bates he said:

"The women! Lord! What a lot of Thurlow Weeds they are! Now that this one is dead and buried, let us get down to the political bunglers who are trying to run the government. Do you think that Lincoln will be renominated?"

"It looks doubtful now," Bates answered. "You know every man in the Cabinet except Welles thinks himself a far greater man than the president, and the president allows him to think so. It doesn't worry him. Chase is laying his wires for the presidency. He has failed to get Lincoln's measure. All this is perfectly understood at the White House. Lincoln pays no attention to it. He said to our friend Hay:

"'I am determined to shut my eyes as far as possible to anything of the sort. Mr. Chase makes a good secretary and I shall keep him where he is!'"

"He goes on about his business like gravitation," said Randall.

"Yes, he's like a law of God—resistless and gentle but not to be defied," said Bates. "He hurried into the office the other day saying: 'For God's sake get this through as soon as you can or they'll shoot that fellow in spite of me.' It was a pardon. Almost every day there is some message of mercy going out to one of his boys."

Randall arose and got his hat and coat, saying that he was due at the White House in a quarter of an hour. It was a Sunday evening and the Lincolns were alone in their apartment. The president was reading aloud to the boy Tad who stood at his knees. Mrs. Lincoln sat under the evening lamp with a newspaper in her hand.

"When Sherman takes Atlanta we may get some news of Nancy," she said as she shook the hand of the young colonel. "His campaign is well under way."

"I have been thinking of that," Randall answered.

"Father, it is said that McClellan hopes to be nominated again by the Democrats," the lady remarked, looking toward the president as she put the paper away.

Mr. Lincoln, being busy with his little son, did not answer, and she repeated her remark.

"McClellan!" he exclaimed as he closed the book in his lap. "That reminds me of Governor Crittenden's hen. One day the governor was in council when his small boy rushed into the room and said, 'Father, the black hen is setting,' 'Go away, son, I am very busy,' the governor answered. The child disappeared but returned in a moment and wistfully repeated the news about the black hen. 'You must not bother me now. Let her set!' said the governor. 'But, father, she is setting on one egg and I think it's rotten,' the boy insisted. The governor got rid of him by saying, 'Well, son, let her set. Her time is not very valuable.' "

Colonel Hope has written:

> Then, for a whole minute, the like of which I have rarely seen, the Sabbath quiet of the room was broken by merry laughter. It was a notable experience to see and hear the joy of the president. I think that he had not realized when he began the story how accurately the setting hen and the spoiled egg represented McClellan and the Democratic Party of that time.

"After all the setting hen is not to be despised," Mr. Lincoln added presently, thus crowning his joke with a touch of kindness.

CHAPTER XXXI

A CHRISTMAS PARTY AND THE RETURN OF ABNER PERT

In that summer of 'sixty-four in the War Department Randall had the pleasure of meeting the distinguished Generals Grant and Sheridan.

"There was no fuss and feathers about them," he writes. "They were plain fighting men. Grant was in the clothes of an ordinary citizen. He carried a shabby army overcoat and slouch hat. He was of medium height. His head was large, his frame compact. He was a deep-chested, broad-shouldered man with blue-gray eyes and brown hair and regular features. He was cool and undemonstrative. He had a simple, earnest manner and a face full of rugged strength. It was like the calm, storm-swept faces of men used to the sea and to looking up at the roof of the world. Therein was the firmness and persistency which had won his great renown. He had not, however, the magnetic personality of Rosecrans.

"Sheridan was a short man with a notable and disproportionate width of chest and shoulders. He had a broad red face adorned with a small mustache and chin lock. His manners were genial.

"Many stories of these great men had been passing through the department. Every one knew of the prodigious adventures of Grant and of the daring feats of Sheridan. We were astonished to see how plain and simple, how modest and unassuming they were.

"They had an effect upon my character and that is why I mention them. Much flattery had been pressed upon me and unconsciously I had begun to like it. I lost all my conceit when I met these men. It was one of the best things that ever happened to me."

Mr. Favel had gone to New York in June and had fallen ill there and Désirée and her mother had gone north to be with him. Fortunately there are many letters from Désirée Fontane written in this period and the last of them carries our narrative a step forward:

The New York Hotel,
New York City,
December 10, 1864.

Dear Randall, At last my grandfather's health is so much improved that we shall be leaving in a day or two for our apartment in Washington. How much we have missed you I would better not try to say. It is good to learn that you will be glad to see us. We want you to be with us at Christmas time. Will you?

The war nears its end. Atlanta is taken. Savannah must fall soon. The South is devastated as my grandfather said it would be. These are sad days for us, so many of our dearest friends are dead or homeless or destitute. My grandfather will give all that he has and divide it among them. My mother and I are glad that he wishes to do that. We are strong and shall have enough to keep us from want. The memory of his generous, kindly spirit will be a noble heritage.

But, dear Randall, the time has come when we need a friend to give us counsel and sympathy, and you are the best friend we have in the North. It will soon be possible to communicate with our relatives in Georgia and South Carolina. Any day may bring news from Nancy. We pray that it may also bring happiness to you. Oh, dear! What slow feet has Happiness! There are some who never feel her hand but have to content themselves with touching, now and then, the hem of her garment. With much love from all of us flowing down through this pen of mine into these lines, I sign myself

Yours faithfully,
Désirée Fontane.

Randall spent Christmas with Mr. Favel and the Fontanes. On his arrival at their apartment the old gentleman led him to the sideboard and the butler opened a bottle of old port for them.

Mr. Favel raised his glass and said:

"To-day I celebrate the closing of an era in my family history. I do it solemnly and with gratitude for the past and a prayer for the future. Next Christmas I shall be eating the bread of charity."

"But your riches will be the greater for your poverty," said Randall. "It will surely be a merry Christmas. I told the president of your noble plan of disposing of your fortune. He wishes to see you. Let's step over to the White House and present our compliments to the greatest man we know."

They found the president and Mrs. Lincoln at home. The former had been playing for half an hour with Tad and his toys in an upper corridor. Mr. Lincoln said to Favel:

"I have two things to thank you for—the arrest of the criminals who tried to burn New York and the example of noble generosity which you propose to give to your fellow-citizens. Often I have thought of what Christ said to the rich young ruler who asked, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' I think that this is what Jesus meant to have him understand by His well known answer—

" 'You are in need of happiness. I do not think that you have a right to it while you have plenty and many of your brothers have nothing—not even bread to eat or a place to lay their heads. Therefore do all that you can to relieve their bitter want and I will do all that I can to relieve yours. And when you have done the things that I have told you to do, come and follow me.'

"The thing we must all try to do in our treatment of our brothers in the South is *follow Him* as you are doing."

"Thank you, Mr. President," Favel answered. "I am sure that while you are in power there will be no reprisals."

"There shall be no persecution, no bloody work," said the president. "We shall do nothing to increase the bitterness of the South, but everything possible to allay it and to repair the damage done."

"I hope that Almighty God may spare the life of that man," said Mr. Favel, after he and Randall had left the White House. "He, and only he, will be able to restore the broken spirit of the South."

At dinner Désirée was in a beautiful gown—a creation of M'lle Rountree, the famous mantua maker of Philadelphia. It was of pink crêpe looped up with coral.

"It was my last chance," she said in answer to Randall's compliment. "After the war ends, my grandfather will not be able to buy pretty things for me."

"But I shall," said her mother. "There must be one level head in the family. You two would give the clothes off your backs. I will give also, but I am not going to forget you or my father or myself."

"The president gave me the true recipe for happiness," said Mr. Favel.

"Please let me know what it is," Désirée pleaded.

"To begin with it's a harvest. It comes of sowing the seed of happiness. Therefore you and your mother should be happy. It doesn't matter about me. I'm near the end of my rope."

"I have heard often of the end of that rope," said the girl. "I suppose that Methuselah was always worrying about the end of his rope."

"No, he forgot that it had an end, and that's how he happened to be Methuselah," Randall answered.

"Well, a horse is useful as long as he can eat hay," said Mr. Favel, as he took another helping of turkey. "Egad! I still have a great love of good things."

The old gentleman lifted his glass of champagne and quoted: "'The best thing in the world is a good man, but a good woman is better,' especially if she has the grace and beauty of my granddaughter."

They had a merry hour at the table and Nancy was not forgotten.

The plum pudding had been eaten, the coffee and cognac served, when their talk was interrupted by a loud, imperative drumming of the knocker outside their door. Randall has written that it was like the sound of the reveillé when one is dreaming. Mrs. Fontane hurried to the door.

"My soul!—Abner Pert!" they heard her saying.

They arose from the table and approached the lean dark-skinned warrior who now walked with a limp. As he saw them coming he stopped and stepped backward to the wall.

"If ye don't mind," he said, "I caint b'ar to have folks on all sides o' me. I git skeered."

His trousers were tucked in his boot tops. He wore a belt with knife and holster. His clothes were patched and threadbare.

He stood with his cap in his hand and looked solemnly at Mr. Favel, the one member of the party whom he had not seen before. Deep wrinkles crossed his forehead. One bristling eyebrow was lifted a little above the level of the other.

"Did you get to Atlanta?" Mrs. Fontane asked in a voice which betrayed a quickened pulse.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered, his eyes still fixed upon the old gentleman, his fingers nervously feeling the cap in his hands.

"Well, tell what happened."

"I give her the letter, ma'am. Here's the paper. Signed."

He drew from his trousers pocket a dirty scrap of paper with a smear of blood on it and gave it to Mrs. Fontane—the identical formal receipt which she had given him.

"My God!" the good lady exclaimed, turning to Randall. "It is signed Mrs. Andrew Porter."

"Is she married?" Randall asked.

"Married the day I got thar," said Abner.

"So ends the long dream," Colonel Hope remarked sadly. "It was the last and dearest treasure of my youth."

He walked to a window and stood for a little time looking out at the bare trees and gray sward of a park and at the sullen skies above it. He returned to his friends. Désirée and her mother were in tears. Mr. Favel was talking with Abner. The latter was saying:

"I got thar with the letter. A few young bucks took a'ter me. They got plum keerless. Some was hurt severe. I was—but didn't have time to stop. Got into the woods. They'd had enough of Doctor Pert's medicine. Went back for help. Black night come er I'd 'a' had a hemp necktie on me long ago. Stole a hoss. Rode into Sherman's army 'fore daylight. Been with it three months. Gov'ment boat fetched me up from Savannah. It were a severe job."

Abner, who had had the cautious manner of one testifying in court, now looked as if he hoped that nothing more would be expected.

"Sergeant Pert, if you will come to my rooms with me I shall be glad to pay the sum due you," said Randall.

"It is my debt," Mrs. Fontane insisted. "The balance due is now in his pocket."

"You two have been very good to me. My debt to you is large. You have been a mother and a sister to me. For all that I can only say that I love you. This little debt I can pay and I shall send my check to you."

Mrs. Fontane kissed him.

"Randall, don't be disheartened," she said. "You have courage. Now it should be a help to you."

"I have learned that courage and good friends are the great healers," he answered, as he put on his overcoat. "I am going home to sit down by the open fire with my pipe and think it over."

That evening he found in his mail-bag a note from Mrs. Felix O'Dowd. Felix and his wife were at Willard's Hotel and eager to see him.

He set the logs blazing in the fireplace and sat down with his pipe.

"O'Dowd, your little witch dwarf is just a pretty fancy—a bit of Irish lace," he said in his reverie.

"I wonder that I had faith in him, yet after all it was worth having. I am the better for it. I have thought in moments of great danger that he was helping me. Perhaps he did help me, who knows? Désirée is noble-hearted and beautiful and there have been moments—but she is so different! I must offer her all that I have to give. I owe her that. What may come nobody can tell, but I think it must be true that only once can a man have the sublime passion which has filled my heart."

He put on his hat and coat and walked to Willard's Hotel to see Felix and his wife. Their welcome and their friendly words cheered him.

"Now we'll show the brave lad what'll gladden the heart o' him," said Felix. "Bring out the little love captain that led us over the wide world into the gate o' Paradise."

Phyllis went into another room and soon returned leading her little son, then about three years of age. He was naked and as beautiful as the olden dreams of Eros, with dark eyes and curling blond hair.

"I have seen him before," said Randall, as he bent over and lifted the child in his arms and kissed him.

"Aye, he is the very one that led us over the hills and valleys to the hand o' Phyllis O'Connor," said Felix. "Put him in me arms. The childer! The childer! They are the ones beloved o' God! What a power is in them to lead and gladden the heart o' man!"

As Randall sat with Felix and his wife by the fireside that evening he told them of the bad news which Abner Pert had brought from the far South. "Sure it's a tangle in the skein, an' mind ye don't make it worse," said Felix. "Leave it to the witch dwarf as I did. He'll straighten the threads. And have ye no seen him lately?"

"Not a sign of him."

"Kape yer eye peeled. He'll be workin' to get himself born an' when he sees a chance he'll be comin' into yer dreams. Oh, there'll be great connivin'!"

Randall returned to his lodgings not much encouraged. He went to bed thinking of his past and trying to find his way into the future. When he slept at last he heard in his dreams the pattering bare feet of that fairy creature, born in the fancy of the romantic Irishman, and saw him standing by the bedside with a wistful look like that he had seen in the face of the young child that evening.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE LAST DAYS OF FATHER ABRAHAM AND THE SECOND RETURN OF ABNER PERT

SPRING came early on the Potomac in 1865. The lilacs and Judas trees were heavy with blossoms. The dogwood tops in the forest were like lifted snowbanks. Grant's bloody campaign in northern Virginia had ended in the surrender of Lee. Abner Pert and his regiment had been out with Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley.

Cavalry, infantry, artillery were returning. What an outburst of triumphant song! Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys were marching through the streets of the capital, and singing and shouting as they marched toward the heights where they were camping for their last review. Day by day, bugles, drums and the triumphant singing of blue-coated columns—thousands and tens of thousands—streaming onward with torn flags and soiled banners. What a depth of sentiment in those marching songs!

"We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand strong."

In his account of those stirring days the one-armed veteran was wont to sing to his children:

"We'll rally round the flag, boys,
We'll rally once again,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.
We'll rally from the hillside,
We'll rally from the plain,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom.

"The Union for ever, hurrah, boys, hurrah,
We'll down with the traitor
And up with the stars.
We'll rally round the flag, boys,
We'll rally once again,
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom."

Those who cheered the returning boys heard again of that mystic leader—the soul of old John Brown. It was to continue its march into the shadowed places of the earth until human slavery was extinguished in Spain, Portugal and Brazil. Such was the mighty power of it.

Peace had come. The Surrendered Soul of Father Abraham, standing alone, in the midst of varying counsels and raging opposition, had won its long battle. As an able appraiser has written: "The tie between the states which had been a rope of sand was now a chain of steel forged in the furnace of God."

The Vindictives in the Senate were demanding revenge.

It was in the evening of one of those stirring April days that Randall went to the White House to dinner. He has written that the face of the president had a look all its own.

> It is the face I remember when I think of him—worn with care and sorrow, but very gentle and in repose, unspeakably sad. I have seen no face like it.
>
> Chase and Seward and a certain member of the Vindictive party were at the table.
>
> "Mr. President, what are you going to do with Jeff Davis?" the latter asked.
>
> We knew by the look of Mr. Lincoln that he was going to tell a story. Then came the familiar words:
>
> "That reminds me—" He straightened up a little and went on: "That reminds me of an incident in a little town in Illinois where I practised law. One day I was on my way to the office when I saw a boy standing at a corner crying. I felt sorry for the little fellow and asked him what was the matter. He looked up at me with the tears running down his cheeks and said:
>
> "'Mister, do ye see that coon?'
>
> "He pointed at a muddy, scared and dejected member of the coon tribe which glared at us from the end of a string. The boy was at one end of the string, the coon at the other.
>
> "'That coon has given me a heap o' trouble;' the boy sobbed. 'If the darn fool would only gnaw that string in two I could tell 'em he got away.'
>
> "All I want of Mr. Davis is to have him get away."
>
> "Mr. President, I think that we should turn him into an example for all traitors," said the Vindictive gentleman.

"We have done that," Mr. Lincoln answered. "He is one of the most pathetic failures in all history. Our problem is to wipe out the bitterness—not increase it. To forgive and restore what has been destroyed—chiefly mutual confidence and good will."

In the course of the evening the president told of a strange dream he had lately had. He spoke of it lightly. He had dreamed that he was wandering through the White House at night. The rooms were brilliantly lighted and empty. They were silent and yet he could hear the sound of weeping. He entered the last room and lo!—a funeral was being held there. It was crowded with people.

"It is that old touch of superstition in his pioneer blood," Randall thought.

As the young cavalry colonel was leaving with Susy and Stephen Bates that evening, Mrs. Lincoln said to him:

"I saw Mrs. Fontane and her daughter. I have never seen a more beautiful young lady or one with a nobler heart."

"And, Madame, it is said that you are the best judge of men and women in America," Randall answered.

"What a slow poke you are!" Susy exclaimed as she was seated between the colonel and her husband in the hack which took them away. "Why don't you do something?"

"What would you have me do?"

"The loveliest little snare ever set for a human being is getting rusty waiting for you. Good land! Why don't you step into it? We ladies have been watching and hoping until we're worn out. I can stand a good deal, but you would discourage a saint."

"That snare is all in your imagination," said the young colonel.

"It takes a man to be downright stupid," Susy scolded. "You'd better wake up. A rich, handsome young fellow from Baltimore is dead in love with her. If you're too slow he'll carry her off."

"You Allen Pinkerton!" Randall answered. "I do not propose to give you any information. Put up your crowbar and stop prying."

"My gosh, Steve!" Susy exclaimed. "He's hopeless. Bury me under the old oak in the valley."

When he got to his lodgings he found a letter from the keeper of the livery stable in which his animals had lived after his ride from Springfield until he went out with the cavalry. The letter informed him that his dog, Teaser, had arrived at the stable and that he was "in bad shape."

Randall went immediately to see the dog. The latter was lying on a bed of straw. He limped like a wounded soldier to Randall's feet and lay down, whining pitifully. The kindly Irishman who kept the stable explained:

"He came in on three legs an' the feet o' him are that sore! Sure, it's a long road he's traveled!"

"He's had his troubles," said Randall, as he felt the stub of the right foreleg of the little hero, shorn off an inch above the paw. "He probably got that wound at Chancellorsville. I wonder where he has been since that day. His feet are bloody."

The young man sent for his friend, Doctor Mills, the famous veterinary surgeon, who had been in the field with Pleasanton's cavalry. In three days Teaser's feet were healed.

"He is as well as he will ever be," the doctor said when he delivered the dog to Randall. "The cocker soldier was considerably shot up. He has a bullet wound in his thigh and his heart is weak. He has probably traveled hundreds of miles. It's wonderful what a dog will suffer just for the pleasure of seeing an old friend."

"He will live with me hereafter," Randall answered.

Every day the two wounded veterans of the late war had a little walk together in a near park, and gradually the fame of the dog spread through the capital.

One evening Randall was sitting on his sofa with Teaser lying at his side when there came a rap at the door.

Abner Pert in top boots and spurs and cavalry uniform stood facing Randall when he opened the door. They gave each other the formal salute.

"Hello, Sergeant."

The eyes of the stolid warrior glanced around the room as if he were in fear of invisible enemies. He took a step forward and peered through the half-opened door of a clothes closet. Then in a low tone:

"Hello, Colonel. How be ye?"

"Lonesome. I miss my comrades in the regiment. I've only a poor crippled dog to live with. A mulatto boy named Thomas Jefferson looks after my rooms and takes care of the dog when I'm at work."

"I reckoned you'd be gettin' married, sir."

"The fact is, Abner, my girl was the one you took the letter to in Georgia."

"Yes, sir, I knowed that."

"It was a blow to learn that she was married."

Abner Pert walked to the window and back. As he did so he looked through another open door. He came to Randall's side and leaned over and whispered:

"He's dead."

"Who's dead?"

"Her man."

"How do you know that?"

"I killed him."

"You killed him!"

"Plum dead."

Randall arose and looked into the face of the grim fighting man.

"How did that happen?"

Abner answered in a low colorless tone of voice:

"He an' some other fellers follered me. Thought I were a spy. Got keerless. When I look at a man through the sight o' my rifle, he's dead. He won't make no more trouble whatever at all, lessen it be to them that buries him."

"My God! Why didn't you tell me?"

"Thar be things I don't talk about, Colonel, lessen I'm forced. You've got me roped an' throwed down."

He strode across the room and back and stopped facing the colonel and held out his hand.

"My God, sir!" he exclaimed. "You're the best man that ever crossed my trail. Good night."

"Thank you, Abner. Good night."

Sergeant Pert strode to the door where he turned and saluted his colonel. He stepped into the hall and closed the door with a decisive bang.

"Often I have thought of the sound of that closing door," Randall Hope has written. "It signalized the end of our relations. I had had my last look at him. Sheridan has told me of his heroic conduct at Winchester. It was like the gaunt old fighter to say nothing of his adventures and to vanish as he did. He had put the last brick on his structure of duty well performed.

"The avalanche of astonishment was not ended. I had sat down by Teaser and begun to make plans for a trip to Atlanta when my old friend Joseph Israel Slats arrived."

"Same old dog?" Mr. Slats inquired as he stood looking down at Teaser.

"The same dog."

"Once I had a dog. We couldn't agree. I claimed I got the fleas from him. He would have it that he got 'em from me. My wife took sides with me and voted with a broom. She swept him out o' the house as often as he come in. He got into bad company. We had tried to keep him chaste an' pure. It didn't work. He went in for swine, women an' song. That fixed him. He came in one mornin' shot an' poisoned an' chawed up. He had had enough. He was goin' to lead a pure and upright life. It lasted for about a day an' a half when he passed away—"

The placid flow of Mr. Slats' canine reminiscences was interrupted by Randall's impatient request:

"Please tell me where is Nancy?"

"Don't be in a hurry," Mr. Slats answered. "First I report for Slats. He done his duty—fit an' bled an' lied fer Nancy like a gentleman. Kep' things goin' right till Porter got me shut up for a spy. Then he went to work an' convinced them women you was dead, with a sworn statement from the man who killed ye. While I was lyin' in jail, he got Nancy to marry him. He died that day."

"I heard of his death. How is Nancy?"

"She can speak for herself. She is over to Willard's Hotel. Sherman let me out o' jail, and the first chance we had, Nancy an' I skipped. Sherman was an old friend o' mine. We met in St. Louis after I had fit an' bled with John Brown in Kansas. Nancy an' I rode to Savannah an' got up here on a transport. You put on your best bib an' tucker an' go right over there. Her cousin, Miss Fontane, is with her. They're settin' up to see you. I'll stay here an' take care o' the dog till you git back. Don't hurry. This looks like a flealess dog an' I guess he an' I can git along together."

Randall writes: "The jesting of my good friend was lost upon me. I heard it with a sober face. I got my hat and coat and hurried away. I was dimly conscious of a marching regiment, and of finding my way on crowded sidewalks. Suddenly the ringing challenge of a fife and drum! It hastened my footsteps. I halted and wiped my brow and said to myself: 'Take it easy, man. You are not going into battle.' I was only nearing the best moments in my life—the summit of my youth after a long climb. Yet the physical reaction was like that of one facing death—heat and perspiration and a pounding heart.

"Désirée met me at the door. She had a cheerful look in her face. She kissed my cheek. She held my hand and looked into my eyes while her own spoke to me of that which was never to pass her lips—the sacrifice of a noble woman. At last, I knew the truth. She led me to a chair in silence. She went and rapped upon a door and called: 'Nancy, he is here.'

"What a tender note of good cheer was in her voice!

"The answer came promptly: 'Well, lock the door and bolt the windows. Don't let him get away. I'll be out in a minute.'

"Désirée came and whispered: 'She is more beautiful than ever.'

"Then I heard the silvery tinkle of a tiny bell. It was in Nancy's hand as she came out of her room.

"I can go no further with the story of that golden hour. It were better untold. I can tell of battles which have changed the current of the world's history but I have not a tongue for greater things."

* * * * * * * *

Below is the account which Colonel Hope has given of the last tragic moments in this eventful history.

"Nancy and Miss Fontane and I were late in getting to our seats in the theater. We were on the center aisle about half-way down the main floor. The eccentricities of Lord Dundreary amused us.

"A scene had passed its climax. A drop fell. We could hear the sound of the shifting behind it. The mimicry was over. In a moment the little theater was to be immeasurably enlarged and what an audience! As I think of it now all the children of men seem to be looking down from its sloping galleries. Its stage was waiting for a great scene in the endless drama of humanity. Indeed Satan himself, coming down from his throne in the kingdom of darkness, will there speak his curse and proudly stride across it and the wrath of God will fill the hearts of men and bow their heads in sorrow. We were to see no more of the petty painted mimicry of the merry players.

"In the pause people began to express opinions of the play and to look about them. Most of them were gazing up at the presidential box draped with flags. We saw Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln. He sat at the rear of the box. The good lady was chatting with friends. She greeted us with a smile and a nod.

"We were looking at our program when we heard the pistol shot. The sound was not loud. It would seem to have been muffled somehow. Not many in the audience ceased their talking, perhaps because like sounds are often heard in a theater. Then a second's hush with something in it that lifted me to my feet. I turned and looked up at the president's box. Its occupants were crowding toward the rear of it. A man in black broadcloth stood on its railing. He jumped toward the stage. The copious drapery of the flag caught the spur on one heel as he left the railing. It partly turned him. Before he could recover his balance he landed on one foot and a knee. The shock must have given him great pain for the fall was about fifteen feet, but he arose gamely and stood erect, a gleaming dagger in his hand.

"It was John Wilkes Booth. How swiftly my thoughts ran back to that night in the deep woods and to the portentous forum scene in Julius Cæsar and to the prophetic words of Felix.

"The familiar golden voice rang out in the words: '*Sic semper tyrannis.*' He walked diagonally across the stage toward a rear exit. All this had happened in a few seconds. I sprang down the aisle and tried to force my way through the crowd, now panic-stricken, to the stage. I was held in a vise. I could not have got through without bloodshed. Cries of murder filled the air. Mrs. Lincoln was leaning over the box rail. She was weeping hysterically. She had tried to say: 'He has killed the president.'

"What an uproar had arisen! The old and feeble were being trampled. I had got back to Nancy and Désirée and was doing my best to quiet and protect them. The soldiers arrived. They cowed the pressing, panic-stricken, weeping people with strong-arm work and savage oaths. I did what I could to help them. Soon we had cleared the theater. The ladies and I found our cab and hurried toward the White House for I was thinking of poor Tad. I knew that he was out at a children's party and would soon be coming home.

"Bells were tolling. Crowds of people had gathered in the streets. As we passed them we could hear shouts of anger and the weeping of women. The old butler was sobbing as he went with us to the deserted family apartment. We sat down. In a moment we heard Tad come running up the stairs.

"'They have shot father dead,' he was calling out in a broken voice.

"Then he ran into the room in which we sat and flung himself on the sofa where often I had seen his father lying. We did all that could be done for the heart-broken lad.

"It was after midnight when we set out for our home. The same mourning crowds were standing in the streets. As we rode along I thought of the words written so long ago:

"'Why criest thou in thine affliction? Why mournest thou in nightly watches? I have redeemed thee.'"

THE END